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Current Notes

Vol. 10, No. 6 July/August 1990

AACE

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COMDEX and CD-ROMS

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Red Storm Rising
Nicklaus' Greatest 18 Holes
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

Dave Small says,
"Hey, world, Stop picking on Atari!"

CES '90

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Lynx and Portfolio
new games for
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7800
2600

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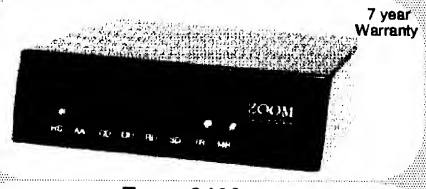

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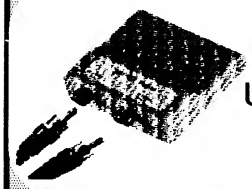

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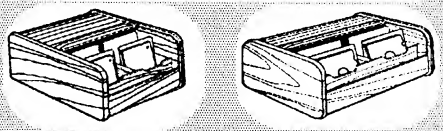

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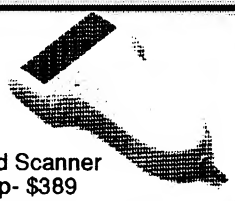

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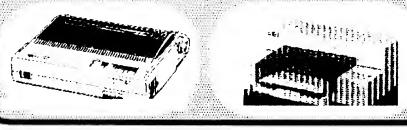

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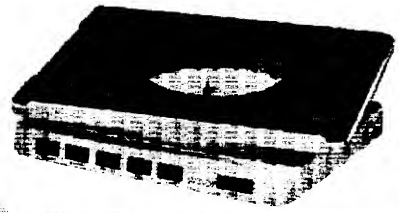

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Drive Master $32

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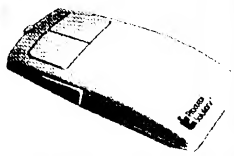

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SYQUEST 44MEG REMOVABLE- $835
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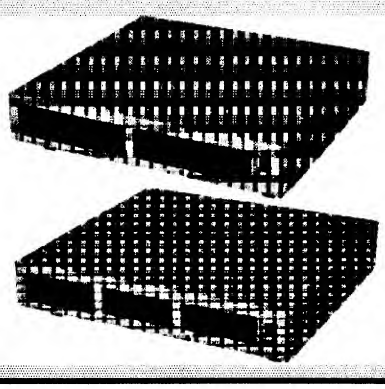

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ATARI 1040STE--offers an extended palette of 4,096 colors and digital stereo sound, one megabyte of memory, 8.0-MHz system speed, an internal 3.5-inch bloppy disk drive, built-in MIDI ports and two standard stereo jacks. Connect to any TV as well as Atari color and mono monitors.

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KEY:

- ▫ ST-related review or article.
- ■ XE/XL related review or article.
- • Machine independent article.

From the Editor's Desk:

by Joe Waters

Last week I enjoyed a four day conference sponsored by the Center for Information Systems Research at M.I.T. (one of the reasons you may be receiving this issue about a week later than usual!). Lester Thurow, currently a dean at MIT and one of the nations leading economists, was the guest speaker at an evening banquet toward the end of the conference. His talk was one of the highlights of the week and I would like to pass on some of his observations.

Dr. Thurow speculated on what historians 50 years in the future might look back on as the key events in the 1990s that helped shape the next half century. Recognizing that events like this are often symbolic, for example, the fall of the Bastille wasn't a major military victory but was important because of what it represented, he suggested two events would stand out. The first is the fall of the Berlin Wall; the second, December 31, 1991.

Most readers will immediately understand the significance of the first event--the destruction of the Berlin Wall represents the end of the Cold War. But what about December 31, 1991? That date marks the end of the U.S. reign as the world's leading economy. In 1992, the 12 countries in Europe will form a United States of Europe. With a population of 325 million, the new, combined European market will be one-third larger than the U.S.

So where will the U.S. be 50 years down the road? As the military threat diminishes, how will we fare in the coming economic wars? (Wasn't it a certain Jack T. that liked to say "Business is War?")

A nation's economic well-being traditionally has been determined by four factors: natural resources, capital, technology, and labor. Natural resources are becoming less and less important in a nation's total output. The whole world has been increasing natural resource productivity (fewer and fewer farmers are needed to supply all our food needs). The availability, or lack thereof, of natural resources will not play the dominant role that it did in the 19th century.

Similarly, the importance of a nation's capital is diminishing. Entrepreneurs in any country can tap a global capital market to obtain the funds to build as modern a plant as can be built anywhere in the world.

For many years, the U.S. relied on its technological leadership to maintain its leading position. U.S. industry concentrated its research on developing and producing entirely NEW products. By contrast, Japan has devoted a lot of its research to developing new production methods. Traditionally, the first one to introduce a new product gains a monopoly advantage until the rest of the world catches up. With technological advances it has become easier and easier to reverse engineer, or copy, any new product. So, even though the U.S. invented the VCR, foreign competitors were able to produce their own versions relatively quickly and then, because they had invested in more modern production processes, could produce the product cheaper than the company that had invented it! U.S. business is still concentrating research on producing new things and has yet to give much thought to improving the overall production process.

That leaves us with people as the final key ingredient to a nation's wealth. Unfortunately, we aren't doing too well here. As U.S. industry brings in more modern technology to stay competitive, the workplace will become more and more complex. Routine jobs will be done by robots. The labor force will have to be significantly more skilled to handle the new high-tech equipment. Our school systems, however, are not producing enough graduates with enough skills to be productive in the work place. U.S. industry is finding it has to devote more and more expenditures on educating its own labor force. Dr. Thurow cited the case of one German firm, producing a particularly complex product, that included the cost of training workers in the basic price of their system. However, they found that it takes so much longer to train American workers that it was not economic to even offer their product in the U.S. Other U.S. firms are finding they have to shift production to other countries because they cannot find enough qualified workers to produce their products economically in this country.

The above analysis implies that the strongest nations in the 21st century may be those not with the strongest military, but rather those with the smartest, best trained, most innovative population. A new form of competition has begun that may be much preferable to military conflict, but one in which the U.S. may not fare as well as many would like.

So, what does all this have to do with Atari. Many of you out there represent a new generation of pioneers. You are actively exploring the new technology of a computerized world. In spite of all that you do not know and do not understand, you still understand more about computers and automation than most of our population. You really are improving your own skills and capabilities. And you are also providing your children with an environment that gives them an invaluable experience with the technologies and machines that will be critical to their future.

Enough of this seriousness. Enjoy the summer, enjoy your computers, relax and have some fun. We'll try and do the same. See you again in September.

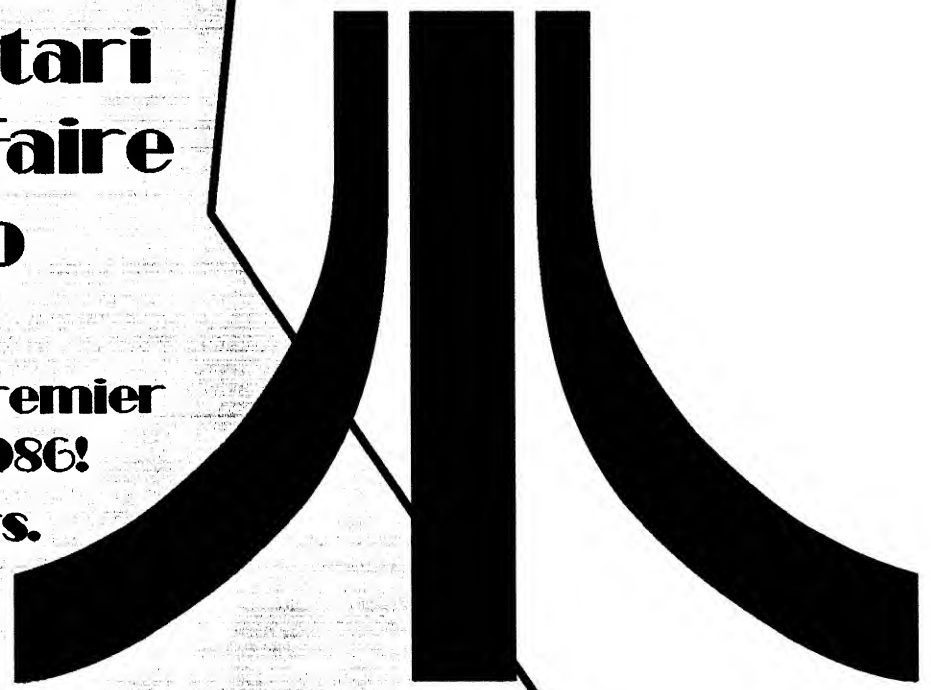
See you in September...

at GLENDALE!

The Southern California Atari Computer Faire version 4.0b

The West Coast's Premier Atari Event since 1986!

BY users... FOR users.



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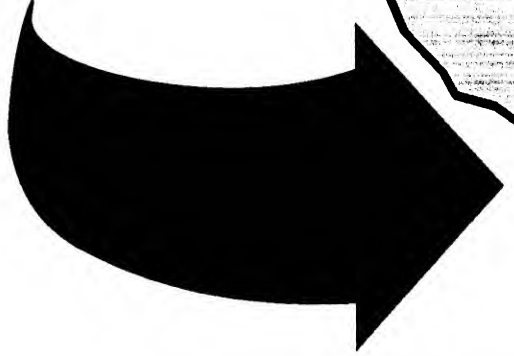


Saturday, September 15 and Sunday, September 16 at the Glendale Civic Auditorium, Glendale, California.

For Information, write: John King Tarpinian, 249 North Brand Boulevard #321, Glendale, California, 91203, or call 818-246-7286.

Errors in Current Notes May Issue

Dear Joe,

Hi there! I just got around to reading the May issue of Current Notes (I've fallen behind on the latest issues due to work pressures), and I'd like to ask if you would please print corrections for *several* mistakes in Bill Price's "Typesetting with the ST" article.

We were very happy that he mentioned CodeHead Software and *G+Plus* in his article. However, this is his first mistake--the name of our product is "*G+Plus*," not "GDOS+ Plus" as he stated it. You know what they say ... it doesn't matter if a review of a product is good or bad, as long as they get the name right? Well, I'm not sure I entirely agree with that statement, but I'd sure appreciate it if you could set the record straight on this.

Also, Mr. Price's capsule description of how *G+Plus* works is incorrect in several ways. (So incorrect, in fact, that I have to wonder if he's ever actually used our program?) He states:

"When the hard disk is booted, GDOS+ Plus (sic) presents a menu for selection of the SYS file to be used."

This is completely wrong! *G+Plus* does not present any sort of menu at bootup time; it lets you load new SYS files at any time, without recourse to a menu.

Mr. Price goes on to state:

"If you subsequently want to switch to another program or printer, the system must be rebooted and the appropriate SYS file selected."

Again, this is 100% incorrect ... in fact, it couldn't be farther from the truth! The entire purpose of *G+Plus* is to make all the rebooting and renaming of SYS files unnecessary. When you use *G+Plus*, you NEVER have to reboot to select a new SYS file for a different printer or program; you can load a new SYS file at any time, and even set things up to load the appropriate SYS files for each GDOS-using program automatically if you desire.

If Mr. Price had actually used our product, he couldn't possibly have gotten these points wrong; these two points are the MAIN advantage of using *G+Plus* instead of GDOS. Mr. Price is correct that Atari's GDOS has many disadvantages, and is clumsy to use--but CodeHead Software's *G+Plus* removes these disadvantages as much as possible and makes using GDOS applications much, much easier. I'm sure this is why Gold Leaf decided to license a special version of *G+Plus* from us to include with their *WordFlair* document processor.

I always enjoy reading *Current Notes*; it usually has a nice mix of reviews and news, and is usually very accurate. Thank you very much for taking the time to correct these important errors!

Charles Johnson,
CodeHead Software

P.S. I was also disappointed that Pat Raymore's article on the Anaheim World of Atari convention didn't even mention CodeHead Software; we had two booths at the show and released very significant upgrades to both *HotWire* and *MultiDesk* for the first time. (For your readers' information, the current versions of *HotWire* and *MultiDesk* are 2.3 and 2.1, respectively; if you're using earlier versions, you'll find the upgrades well worth it!)

[Sorry about the mis-statements. Your letter should set the record straight. I can certainly sympathize with the World of Atari coverage. CN has had a booth in each of the last three WAACE Atarifests and no review I have ever seen ever mentioned that we were there. -JW]

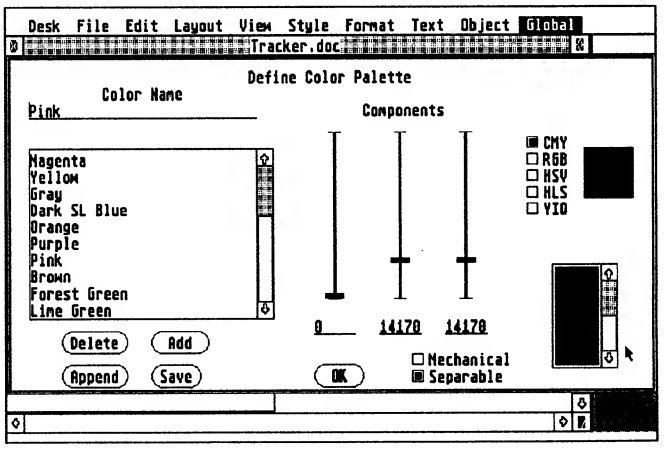
Color Hints for PageStream

Dear CN Editor,

I enjoyed Stephen Rudolph's article, "PageStream in Color," in the June issue of *Current Notes*. The article described Rudolph's exploration of *PageStream's* color desktop publishing power, and his results using a Canon color inkjet printer.

Midway through his article Rudolph laments that he has not "found a way to keep colors from disappearing from the screen." Well, the solution is easy, Mr. Rudolph! Go to *PageStream's* GLOBAL menu bar and select "Edit Color Palette." Click on the color of your choice (in the screen shot example I have selected "Pink"). In the lower right hand corner of the dialogue box (next to the mouse pointer in the enclosed screen snap) you will see a scrollable bar showing how the color you have selected will appear on the screen. Of course, on the monochrome monitor all the colors can show only as black or white. By simply clicking the down arrow in this scroll bar you can change the screen representation of any color. Here, I have made Pink appear as black on the screen. This will keep pink objects from disappearing from your monochrome screen.

Creating color documents on a monochrome system can indeed be tricky. My suggestion is to make ALL your colors show up black; this way no objects will ever disappear. Next, make a one-page chart with lots of boxes, each box holding a different color in your *PageStream* palette. Print this out and you will have a handy color reference sheet. I created a full color point-of-sale display card with *PageStream* for *Tracker/ST*. Since I live in New



York, I am lucky enough to work three blocks from a printing service which has the amazing QMS color postscript laser printer. First, I printed a reference sheet to see what the colors would look like, then I printed the display card. When I went to the desk to pick up my page, the manager said, "Great use of color. You must be using *Quark XPress*, right?"

Finally, Mr. Rudolph points out that you can not change the color of a grouped object. However, if you select the "Ungroup" command and leave all the sub-objects selected (but not grouped), you can indeed assign a color to each of those selected objects with a single command. This is a real time saver. After assigning the color, you can easily regroup the selected objects.

Good luck with your color *PageStream* printing adventures!

Nevin Shalit, SYSOP
SoftLogik area on GEnie

[Thanks for the hints, Nevin. You are lucky to live near a shop that can produce color, or high-quality, print output. Now, if only someone in the Atari world would offer this service for Atari desktop publishers, I think they would find a very big demand! -JW]

A Number of Small Events

Dear Joe,

April was a disaster for me. Nothing seemed to go right. But along came May and the dam burst. As a result, I have a number of small events to report, many of which were touched on in the May *Current Notes*.

The Junkyard Pussycat threw a small bouquet of catnip to Joppa Computer Products. I wish to second his comments. I ordered a number of items from Joppa just last week. Everything was in stock and arrived here in Florida in short order in good condition. I got the *Universal Item Selector III*, and I was charged the May price although I was ordering from the April CN. A small, but appreciated saving.

Among the items was *Quartet*, a digitized music package from Microdeal which has been the most enjoyable music package I have ever had the pleasure to use (I am NOT a musician. If you don't believe me, try out the "Liberace" program in the May "Atari Small Miracles" column). I don't feel qualified to do a review of it (not yet anyway), but I do recommend it as something that is fun to fool around with.

The mysterious missing *Atari Explorer* also showed up--in the samemail with my copy of *CN*. The editorial was altered, but the letter columns till had some nasty things to say about Atari. As for myself, I feel that they are doing the best that they can with what they have got--much like Congress, the President, etc. You may take that as a compliment, or whatever for Atari--the end results are the same. Anyhow, I hate to lose another magazine, so I will hope for the best.

Where is the LYNX? Well, Ft. Myers is the Gobi desert of AtariLand, but the LYNX showed up in abundance at Toys-R-Us a few weeks ago. I just discovered it last week. In addition, I got *Gauntlet III*, which is so new that the *VG&CE* magazine put out by the publishers of the extinct *ANALOG/STLOG* had no word of it. (By the way, what are they going to do about our unfulfilled subscriptions?).

This version of *Gauntlet* is quite nice and has a rather unique quality. You play the game holding the LYNX vertically in real arcade fashion! I had only one scare. *Gauntlet* was acting strangely and I thought about the CN article a few months ago where the LYNX gave up the ghost after a few hours. I discovered that it's a good idea to remove the batteries when using the AC adapter. I also bought a small plastic box made to hold business cards. This holds a number of the game cards (the size of a 35mm slide) in one compartment and the cable for hooking up multiple LYNXes in the other. *Gauntlet* allows four players. Each player needs a LYNX and a Gauntlet game.

I found the letter from James Dupree Jr. interesting. I remember leafing through the July/August 1989 issue of *Atari Explorer* and seeing the picture section. "Look!", I said, "there's a picture of Simone!". Looking more closely, I see the label says "Simone." Simone is a character on General Hospital (the actress was recently changed). This should tell Mr. Dupree that his artistic talents have some merit since I recognized her instantly.

My friend and I have been dealing with SIDELINE SOFTWARE in Ft. Lauderdale, particularly for UK magazines and games. Mike has been very good about helping us with game problems. My friend has a second-hand 1040 with TOS 1.0 and a disk drive which does not go beyond 80 tracks. Mike has made every attempt to help us get things running. He provided us with a 50/60 HZ program which solved a number of problems also. We had a few problems with our magazines in April, but I attribute most of that to our flaky mail service here. Incidentally, my friend has *BATMAN, The Movie* and it runs fine on his old 1040. On my TOS 1.2, the disk acts like (and appears to a disk analysis program) as an unformatted disk! That's the strangest thing I have run across yet.

The incompatibility problems from one TOS version to the next seem minor, but they are a real pain when they turn up in your own disk drive! I have a copy of TOS 1.0 on disk, and it seems to load OK, but it doesn't seem to help to run anything. Where, ohwhere, are our magic *Translators*!

Right behind my "Atari Small Miracles" column is a review of No Frills *Print Shop Users Utility Disk*. This is a terrific program as the article says. The owner, Ed (I won't tackle his last name either), is a swell fellow to talk to. The big danger here is a large phone bill. He has a large list of both ST and 8-bit software. Some of the 8-bit stuff is in short supply so if anyone needs anything hard to find, send for his list.

I have been looking for over a year for "Screens," a windowing utility which nobody seemed to know existed. I just got it from the Novatari XL/XE library and it is excellent!

May has been a good month for me. Let's hope that June is a good month for Atari. Maybe there will be so much good news that *Current Notes* will have to print a July AND an August issue!

Frank Kweder
Ft. Myers, FL

TT's in Canada, A New Face at Atari, Software Awards, Atari & the USSR, Lynx Vs. Turbo Graphics Express, Portfolio Embroglio

"Business Is War," but Isn't the Cold War Over?

The CES, as you will read in Kirk Osterman's report, glorified two of Atari's products. With a full court press, Atari "touched" everyone who came near their booth with a cap, with a shirt, or a copy of the "magazine." For the first time ever, Atari had paid "lead" dollars to advertise and put their product "ahead" of the competition. Wait. This was not your computer or ours, but rather the Lynx and the Portfolio. That's where the bucks were plowed! That's where the $$$ would be made this year in the U.S. Don't get hung up on "new product" exposure and actual sales. Bunch the shoulder muscles, lower the head, and charge! "Atari will sell more Portfolios and more Lynx's in the U.S. this year than they have sold Atari computers to date!" Are you breathless? You should be. Just before they launched their last "Geronimo" on the U.S. market, it appears they cut their spear in two. The Portfolio is a product of DIP, England. They were the ones who made it. Atari was bright enough to recognize and corral it as a winner. But then "old habits" began to creep forward. Those "habits" that caused the belacose Atari to tell Casio to "hug the knife," who needed their screens for the Lynx? Result? Casio passed "the knife" to Atari, said "hug it yourself" and cut them off from further deliveries. Result? Atari hit the Xmas market with less than 50% of the Lynx product they had counted on to "saturate" an unadvertized market.

Never to say die, after missing the Xmas sales, Atari regrouped and vowed to "overwhelm" this year's market. Result? By mid-year they have the Lynx out on dealers' shelves, as well as mass marketing it to Toys-R-US, Sears, etc.,. The dealers are not ecstatic. On each sale, with luck, they make a munificent profit of "$17.50." If you're a dealer, it is cheaper to buy Lynx from Sears (who gets them from Atari for $135) at $159 a copy than it is from Atari at $169, dealer cost. These are Atari's two heavies. The Lynx and the Portfolio are lead-off hitters in the U.S. for the fateful year of Atari. They are the only two machines which will be nationally advertised. They are supposed to

be the volume leaders for the company. Problem? If you sold them day and night at your dealership, you still wouldn't be able to pay "your open the door costs each morning." The margin is so thin. And besides that, sales of the Portfolio have dropped off markedly.

But, wait. Portfolio is coming out in several new versions. Sam Tramiel announced that at the last stockholders' meeting. There will be an expanded memory 512K version, a 286 version and an ST version. If that doesn't do it, what will?

Well, that might or might not have. Atari has reportedly refused to pay DIP, the British company that sold them "rights" to the Portfolio in exchange for royalties, the last quarter's royalties. Presumably, this is not just Atari being "slow to pay," which is purportedly part of their "reputation," but a demand on Atari's part that DIP provide them with "the new ROM's" before they settle up. DIP has reacted, as Casio did, and cut Atari off. Unless Atari "awakens" and pays up there won't be any more models, much less ROM's, much less Portfolios. So, as Gorbachev says, with infinitely more wisdom than many, and we paraphrase, "an open market economy is essential to our survival; it will mean great sacrafices, but if we don't start now, we are finished..." Atari, anyone for "peristroika?"

The Envelope, Please

And the winner is....! Some of you may have missed the Software Publishers Association awards last spring, because they followed right on the heels of the motion picture Academy Awards, an event which sends you to bed early the next evening. They weren't televised, but in our world of computers they are "big news"; they tell you who created the best programs of the year. When the first awards were announced, unfortunately, not many included programs you could run on your ST's, except via emulators. Toward the end of the various category of awards, however, they had "Best Action/Arcade Programs, Best Sports, & Best Strategy Program." Surprise, everyone of them was available for the ST: *Weltris* (Best Arcade), *HardBall,* and *Populous* (Strategy). Does that tell you something about your computer? Well, yes, and no. Categories where the ST was completely lacking were Best Business Application/ Best Design Achievement (*NewWave*,

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application that works with Microsolf *Windows*); Best Special Needs Program (*Eye Relief Large Type Word Processor*), Best New Use & Best Productivity/Creativity Program (*Multi-Media Encyclopedia*), and several elementary school educational awards (*Playroom, Math Shop Jr., & Math Blaster Mystery*). In the finance and spreadsheet category? Still no ST action--*Quicken 3.0* for checkbooks and budgets, and *Quatro* for number crunching on multiple spread sheets. So is Atari always to remain out of it, out of the serious stuff? Not quite. The program projected to be the top hit for the ST this year is *SimCity* which lets you create and manage a modern city, e.g. taxes, crime, and other disasters, including escaped monsters. Where did that fit in the awards? Numero uno! It garnered three honors, Best Simulation, Best Entertainment, and Best Curricular Program.

Bedtime or 4th of July for Atari?

The three of them, three of the Tramiel sons, marched into the office of the President of Atari Computers, Mr. Ames-Klines. He had been empowered by father Jack last December to run the computer, versus the game or the music, world of Atari. Well, six months had passed, stock was hovering around 5 to 5 1/4, just 1/4 of a point above May's all time low of 4 7/8's. Profits were down, even though much of Federated had been unloaded and so it was time. In line with Atari policy of "no tip offs," Ames-Klines's firing was immediate. Out the door he walked with his briefcase in hand.

Who might replace him? That question started a firestorm of rumors, along with some fact and some fiction, that blazed throughout Atari, but more intensely around the dealerships and among some of the developers, who were already agreeing that unless you "wrote" for IBM or the Mac in addition to Atari, you couldn't survive. A mysterious "Imminence grise" was coming in to make Atari, U.S. well again. French by background and experienced, he would have complete authority to turn the company around.

One version of "the story" insisted he would make Atari U.S. the pre-eminent computer game company in the country. All Atari computers would go mass market, and with an exclusive emphasis on games. The 520 ST, the 1040 ST's would be running games. Lynx and the old game machines would be there up front. Sears would be where the Atari was.

When the dealers started comparing what they were hearing, they went "ballistic," as President Bush says. There was talk of a $500 million class action suit. That suggests how far the rumors had gone and how wildly out of hand they had gotten. None of those who were chewing on this part of the story had met this man. None knew his name.

The other version maintained that the "Grey Imminence" had been hired by Jack, who had known him for almost two decades, and had originally worked with him at Commodore. He would take orders from no one but Jack. None of the sons would wield a knife over him. In fact, initially his office might not even be in Sunnyvale. The fellow was a small giant in the computer world of Atari. If somebody tried to abort one of his plans, he was quickly "aborted" instead. Those who knew of him or knew him had their fingers crossed that he would come in, believing it might suddenly be "4th of July" again for Atari, for dealers, developers, and the users.

How much of such talk should be taken seriously? Who is the new President of Atari Computers? Officially, there isn't one yet. But the name of Atari, France is Elie Kenan. His background, and the high degree of respect he commands from those who have worked with him, is remarkably similar to the person depicted in the last version of the story.

Mirror, Mirror

Who has the most computers of all? The most personal computers that is, and where is their highest concentration both in total numbers and per capita? Some of you familiar with the territory might have thought where they make them, Silicon Valley. But no. In total numbers, the three top areas are Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C., in that order, with between 1.5 and 1.1 million computers in individual hands. But if you take per capita, that city where there is more modem activity, more desktop publishing, and laptopping, and networking, then Washinton, D.C. takes the lead with over 400 computers per 1,000 adults. Who says bureaucracies are slow?

If You Can't Wait

For those of you who like to be the first one of the gang to pop up the latest game on your computer screen, Sideline Software of Ft. Lauderdale, FL (1-800-888-9273) seems to acquire the latest European games before anyone else. Last month their top ten, compiled from total sales for the ST and the Amiga were: *F-29 Retalliator*, *Warhead* (space epic), *Conquerer* (a great tank simulation), *Xenomorph* (role playing game), *Midwinter* (a strategy game, *Gravity* (weird), *Castle Master* (3D adventure), *The Kristal*, *Ultimate Golf* (Shark Attack in Europe), and *E-Motion* (possibly addicting, or so claims the CN author reviewing it, who, at his first sitting, was up until 2 A.M.).

Fragging

During the Vietnam war, as many of you know, the way to handle an excessively demanding superior was to roll a live grenade into his tent after he was sleeping soundly. Many of you who read Bill Moes' review of *The American Pastime Baseball Simulator* may recognize that authors have subtler

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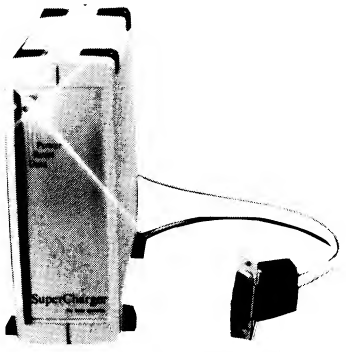

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ways of sticking it to their editors. Moes is from Ohio and his editor from Maryland. A close look at the game diagram on the first page of his article will prove our point. Moes has "arranged" for the Cleveland Indians to beat the Baltimore Orioles 9 to 8.

How the Other Half Lives

Bill Teal, father of *pc ditto II*, in reporting back from the Paris SCIOB show, which was combined with the European version of Comdex, told his *ST World* readers that Atari clearly outshown both Apple and IBM. Reason was the former had a large active display area and the other two were absent. He also noted that French TV devoted two-thirds of their evening coverage of the show to the ST.

Another New Market

Atari is to be commended for making a serious and realistic effort to get into the Soviet market early. Chris Anderson's eyewitness account of Atari mixing it up with Soviet high-teckers last month after Gorbachev ended his U.S. summit visit gives a sharply defined view of where barter deals with the Soviets can and cannot go. The West Germans have been doing it quite successfully with the Soviets for two decades. If both of Atari's Polish and East German computer "deals" were actually to materialize, Atari would have more computers in the USSR and Eastern Europe than Apple, at least for a time.

Lynx Beware!

NEC, who has not fared too well with their Turbo Graphics game machine in the face of stiff Nintendo competion, is coming out with a handheld version. Though not expected until Xmas, people who saw it at CES maintain it will be strong, if not unbeatable competition for the Lynx. Reason, it has a much sharper resolution, 300 x 200 with 512 colors on screen, can be seen at an angle, has an adaptor to plug it into your TV monitor, and most significantly, has a library of 50 games. It is pricey, at $269 without games, about $80 more than the Lynx, that comes with four games. Newsweek magazine did a comparison of the handheld Game Boy and Lynx, and declared Lynx clearly the winner. However, they were in approximate agreement with our predicition that Game Boy for two reasons would outsell Lynx 10 to 1--cost and advertising. Newsweek's actual prediction was that Game Boy would still control 85% of the market.

Getting the Boot on Boot Up

There was one minor problem. The STe wouldn't boot in medium resolution. TOS 1.6 had a bug that caused the STe's to lock up when booting in med-rez. The machines were all over Canada before Atari announced they needed TOS 1.62 to function properly. How, you might ask, can you put out a new computer that crashes on boot up and not be aware of such a gross bug? How could they ship 1,000 STe's from Taiwan with the old TOS in them. Did Atari just turn the boat around to send them back to be refitted with TOS 1.62? No, dealers who have been recxeiving the STe's find there is a patch fto be put in the AUTO folder. Are the STe's selling? Is grass green?

Clock Speeds

The mighty new Atari machine, the thirty-two bit TT computer, made its official landing in Canada at the Montreal show in early June. Despite the fierce debate raging over Quebec and the Constitution, computer enthusiasts thronged to the show, described as "having the largest Atari presence in the history of Atari in Canada." There you could see both STe's and TT's running side by side, with *Calamus* and *DynaCADD* up on the screens. While selling in Canada now, the TT will be in limited supply until September. It won't make its U.S. debut until Comdex in November. When TT's will actually be available for dealers to sell is still a mute point. While Sam Tramiel has already told stockholders they will see it this summer, he didn't say where. There are 100 TT's available for U.S. developers, and the fight to get one is heating up. Guessing is that though the dealers had hoped to have it to pull them through 1990, it may not be "ready" in the U.S. until as late as next spring.

The first TT's in Canada were not fast, not as fast as a bright new machine should be, and described as not that much faster than the ST's. But those machines were at least two revisions old. The clock speed on them was 16MgHz. However, Sam Tramiel told people at the CES show (see Kirk Ostermann's report) that the latest versions of the machines will have a clock rate of 32 MgHz. Atari, Canada expected to see the latest verson by the end of June. Comments about its slow speed also arose from running software written for the ST on the TT, versus software written specifically for it. The ST software will only run about 1/3 faster than it does on its own computer, while that written for the 68030 CPU of the TT runs strikingly faster; exact benchmarks are not yet available. But as Nathan Potechin, of ISD points out, as soon as he has a 32-bit compiler available, which could be as early as midsummer, then it will be merely a matter of recompiling the ST programs for the ST to get full speed out of them. Once that happens, he suggests, it will take an IBM 386 machine to keep up with the TT. There are reports that there will also be an Ethernet card and a GENLOCK card, plus a software IBM emulator. And Spectre GCR, the Mac emulator? While David Small refuses to "break compartmentation" and remains dumb on this question, the word around Atari, Canada is that he has been working on a Spectre GCR port to the TT for some time.

Piracy on the Inside

Word inside Atari is that they've designed a new "Jolly Roger" to

designate "piracy"; it's in the shape of a "Snake." Seems that The Snake, whoever that is inside of Atari, has been claiming that he is the author of several of the new programs for the Portfolio. Friends of John Feagens who worked with him at Atari are unhappy about this. Feagan was, they maintain, one of Atari's better programmers, and when "The Snake" plagerized the authorship of his programs he quit. Feagans himself declined to comment on this report. Some of you will remember him for *ST Writer*, Atari's premier word processor. At about the same time BSA (Business Software Alliance, set up to, among other things, combat piracy) had Atari's offices on Taiwan raided because they had reports that pirated programs were being used by Atari in their Taiwan operations. The raid confirmed this. Jack Tramiel immediately announced that the raid was being blown up out of all proportions and that BSA had gone after the wrong targets. Apparently, he ended his protest with the rationalization that it was "local employees, not Atari" who had broken the code.

"Hot News"

That's the way the PR notice starts out. Now and then "a different" and possibly valuable program arrives for the ST. *Forecaster ///* would seem to fall into that category. *Forecaster ///* claims it can predict the weather, analyze current atmospheric conditions and display a weather almanac for the day. What more could we weather freaks, or even just casual what-should-I-wear-today people, ask for. Before you close down for the night, just run *Forecaster ///* and all the early morning questions, such as, "Do I need the umbrella?" are answered. *Forecaster ///* also claims to be able to display weather graphics from Compuserve, create weather radar maps like those on TV from digitized data available from WeatherBank and other services, and chart daily weather records using a spreadsheet. For $25 in check or money order, Randall Kopchask, 2233 Keeven Lane, Florissant, MO 63031 will speed it on its way to you, weather permitting; or call 314-831-9482.

Erratum

Navarone will continue to support the ST computer. Last month we said Navarone would continue to sell their scanners for the ST, but would no longer provide support for new products, nor would they develop an optical character reader for the ST. 'Tis true they had to give up on the OCR; when costs were weighed against potential volumne, it just didn't justify going into such a project. But Navarone wishes to assure ST owners that it is solidly behind the ST.

Sears, Oh, Sears

Dealers, for obvious reasons don't like it. But Atari hopes that opening up its line for Sears to sell will significantly increase its volumn of U.S. sales. One of the reasons dealers are miffed is they feel it's a violation of a written agreement that Atari would not sell through mail order or discount. Another is that if you are a dealer, right now you pay more for your hardware than Sears does. Not a lot but just enought to take the edge off your margin, which is already low. As we noted, Sears sells the Lynx for less than dealers can buy it from Atari. Sears pays $35 less for the Portfolio and the 520 STFM package with 10 games at $270, will purportedly cost the dealer that without the games.

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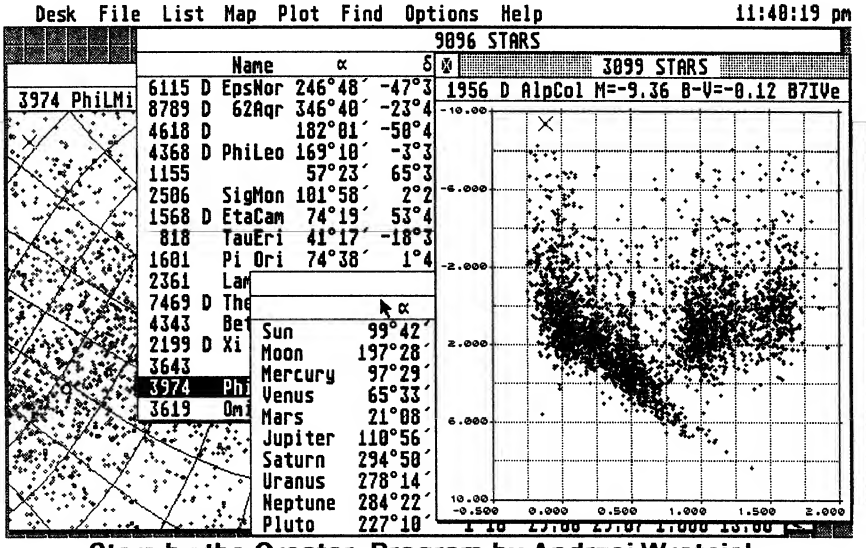

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Star Base runs on all ST computers with 1 MByte or more, color, monochrome or MoniTerm (can be also used on a 520ST, but with fewer stars). Price includes one update.
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SUMMER CES 1990

Good Things Come in Small Packages, Atari Was Lavish in Promoting the Lynx, Expect Strong Competition Soon

BY KIRK OSTERMAN

Unpredictable

Yep, it's hard to believe but another Summer CES has come and gone. And what a show it was! After attending the past eight CES's in Chicago, I've learned at least one thing: you can never be quite sure what Atari is going to do, and this year was no exception. As the nearly 100,000 industry folk poured into McCormick Place, they were greeted by hostesses passing out copies of the "CES Trade News Daily" magazine. The interesting thing to note was that many of the hostesses were wearing Atari hats and, to top it off, the magazine had an ad for the Atari booth on the front cover. Hmmm...this looks promising! Once visitors found their way to the Atari booth, yet more surprises. They were handing out Lynx T-shirts as fast as they could, and of course you couldn't walk away without your matching Lynx hat and your roll of Lynx posters and your Lynx buttons and...well... you get the idea.

The Dominant One

If you have the impression that the Lynx dominated the Atari booth, then you've got the picture. There were about six displays each with four Lynxes attached, displaying old and new titles alike. Just behind all of the Lynx displays was a wall of Portfolios in various configurations with some connected to PCs. Off to the side were some 1040 STE's, and 7800s. All in all, it was a pretty impressive showing from Atari.

Although it was good to see Atari being so high profile, perhaps some of this was due to NEC's announcement of the TurboExpress--NEC's answer to the Lynx. A hand held version of their Turbo Graphics 16 console, TurboExpress features 238x312 pixel resolution (4 times the resolution of the Lynx) color Active Matrix LCD screen. This active matrix screen allows a user to view the game from very extreme angles and still see a clear picture. Also, TurboExpress can display 256 simultaneous colors from a pallete of 512. Additionally, the unit has a connector on the side which allows an optional TV tuner module to be attached. Since TurboExpress uses the SAME cartridges as the TurboGraphics 16 console, it will have a library of about 50 games to choose from when it is released some time in the fourth quarter this year. I had an opportunity to play with the TurboExpress and thought that it had a good feel to it and that its graphics were sharp, but the estimated price of $200-$250 (which may or may not include an initial game) could be a problem for NEC.

Two for the Lynx

Most of the new titles for the Lynx at Atari's booth seemed to be in very early stages of development. A couple of exceptions were *Klax* which is a *Tetris*-like game, and *Slime World* a multi-player scrolling adventure. Another title being shown was *3-D Barrage* which is basically a 3 dimensional version of *Breakout*. The perspective the player has is that of looking down a tube as a ball bounces back and forth.

Rampage, one of the original titles for the Lynx at last years' CES, was on display as well. Apparently, the release of this title has been held up due to a TOTAL rewrite from when it was first shown. In any case, what was being shown and promised for release by October was quite impressive.

In all, 22 new titles were announced, with release dates ranging from this summer to some time in the first quarter of next year.

Also for the Lynx is a series of accessories from "Doc's Hi Tech Game Products." The Megalynx protector is a padded carrying case for your portable game and will retail for about $25. Among the power accessories being displayed was the Megalynx Charge-it, a rechargeable battery pack with a 10 hour capacity, and Megalynx Auto Power to keep you gaming on the road. These products will retail for $30 and $10 respectively.

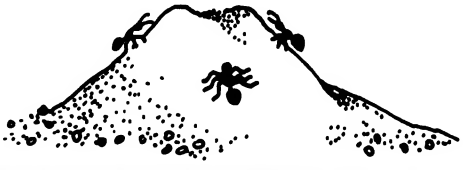
As for the ST, there were impressive new titles announced by Virgin Mastertronic. The first is "*Wonderland*" which was being demonstrated by Anita Sinclair, familiar to all those who are fans of "*The Pawn.*" You are drawn into Lewis Carrol's Alice in Wonderland where you meet all of the main characters of the book as you attempt to solve the challenges ahead of you. Wonderland features a windowing interface which displays the graphics, some of which are animated, a map depicting all of the places you have been in icon form, and a command window with pop-up menus with the appropriate commands. This is

a very sophisticated adventure and one that I'm looking forward to playing as soon as it's released.

Another impressive title from Virgin Mastertronics was *Quasar*. This game is a galactic simulator of sorts that permits the player to colonize planets, barter, set up defenses of planets, and conquer other planets. Again, this is a highly detailed, sophisticated game where installation on a hard disk is recommended. Look for this release in the fall.

Those two titles are the big new ones for the ST's from CES. Unfortunately, there were not too many other ST's to be found, except for the one running a midi demo over at the Casio display. It doesn't seem that long ago, when every other booth at CES had a C64 in it. These days C64s, Amigas and ST's are rather hard to find, now that Nintendo is king.

No show would be complete without a little gossip, right? Although the TT was no where to be seen, an Atari executive was overheard saying the TT will feature not a 16MHZ 68030 but a 32MHZ 68030!!



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"Nice job, Darek" - Darren Meer, ST Informer, 5/90

"If, however, you do not have Turbo ST yet, then Quick ST from Branch Always Software seems to be a better choice, and not only because of the lower price. ... Buy it"
- A. J. Wrotniak, Current Notes, 6/90

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Touch the Future

Atari at the Summer CES

Here are Some of the Atari Press Releases from CES '90

Atari Boosts Computer Lineup with 1040STE

CHICAGO (June 2)--Atari Computer Corporation today announced the expansion of its extensive computer product line with the introduction of the 1040STE at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show.

An advanced version of the 1040ST, the 1040STE is a full-megabyte computer which offers eight times as many colors as the 1040ST, hardware-based smooth scrolling and accelerated graphic speed with the co-processor blitter chip.

The upgraded sound architecture provides digitized pulse code modulation (PCM) stereo sound--ideal for a wide variety of entertainment applications. Additional 1040STE features include an internal 3.5-inch disk drive, 8.0-MHz operating speed, built-in MIDI ports and industry standard modem and printer ports.

Also included is a software package that offers a spreadsheet, word processing, an educational program and entertainment software that utilizes the 1040STE's increased sound and scrolling capabilities. Available in June, the 1040STE has a suggested retail price of $699.95.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Atari Introduces Three New ROM Cards for Portfolio Palmtop Computer

CHICAGO (June 2)--Atari Computer Corporation today introduced three new ROM (read-only-memory) cards for the Portfolio, the first palmtop computer which is MS-DOS 2.11 command compatible, at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show.

The cards, entitled *File Manager/Tutorial, DOS Utilities* and *Finance*, add new features to the Portfolio's already extensvie capabilities.

File Manager/Tutorial provides a window/menu system that allows access to the basic functions of the machine without having to input the typical DOS commands. The card also provides a comprehenmsive tutorial. *File Manager/Tutorial* is now being included with all Portfolio computers, or can be obtained from Atari for $20 plus shipping.

DOS Utilities is a collection of powerful Batch files that enable users to customize Portfolio to meet their individual needs. The card includes more than 78K of versatile files, as well as a public domain communications program. *DOS Utilities* has a suggested retail price of $89.95.

The Portfolio's ROM *Finance* card performs numerous financial, business and statistical calculations. Among its capabilities are compound interest loans and savings, nominal annual percentage rates, commission and sales tax, break-even analysis and forecasting.

Many of the results can be applied to graphs, printed or entered into the Portfolio's built-in worksheet and calculator. The *Finance* card has a suggested retail price of $89.95.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Atari Unveils Nine New Titles for Lynx, Including First-Ever Eight-Player Game

CHICAGO (June 2)--Atari Computer Corporation today introduced nine new software titles for Lynx--the world's first color handheld video game--including a revolutionary eight-player game card, *Slime World*, at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show.

Slime World is the industry's first software package that allows up to eight players, each with their own units, to compete simultaneously. The scrolling game challenges players to enter a world filled with caverns of slime with six adventures that offer a wide range of difficulty.

"We and our software partners have been able to develop uniquely challenging and creative games for Lynx because the product has so many technologically-advanced features," said Sam Tramiel, president of Atari Computer Corporation.

Atari 1040STE Specifications

Processor	MC68000 Microprocessor 32-bit internal, 16,bit external
Operations	Built-in TOS operating system with GEM desktop
System Clock	8MHz
Internal RAM	1MB
Drive	Fully-integrated CPU, keyboard and disk 3.5-inch double-sided, double-density
Mouse	Two-button, high-response
Sound	Digitized PCM stereo sound
Graphics	Co-processor BLITTER chip, Hardware-based smooth scrolling
Color	4,096 coor palette
Ports	MIDI, 2 analog joystick, parallel, RS232C serial, floppy, DMA hard disk, ROM, mouse
Weight	9.5 pounds
Size	2.75"h x 18.75"w x 11.5"d

Slightly larger than a videocassette, the 1-pound Lynx took the video game industry by storm last holiday season with its full-color graphics, fast action and sound effects that put the excitement of video arcade games in the palms of players' hands.

Previously sold only in select markets, Lynx was distributed nationwide in May.

Original Titles and Arcade Hits

New this summer is the much-awaited video arcade hit *Klax*, which was introduced in arcades last January. *Klax* is a strategic game in which players maneuver a platform to catch falling bricks and stack them directionally according to color. The game features unique sound effects, such as a women's voice, applause and screams. *Klax* also has highly-advanced graphics, including multi-colored tiles that move at speeds that accelerate with each level.

Also new are *Rampage* and *Xenophobe*-both four-player games--which follow on the heels of Atari's May 1990 introduction of the industry's first four-player game, *Gauntlet--The Third Encounter.*

Similar to the arcade hit, players in *Rampage* become one of four monsters whose goal is to destroy cities and eat soldiers and tanks while fighting off a defending army. *Rampage* adds a new character, Larry the Lab Rat, to the handheld version.

Xenophobe, a space adventure from Bally-Midway, is an arcade hit that allows players to assume the role of heroes, an alien or a duck-like creature who searches for weapons to destroy a strange infestation plaguing various space stations. *Rampage* and *Xenophobe* will be available this fall.

Other new Lynx titles available nationwide this fall include:

- *Paper Boy*, an entertaining game in which players become a paper boy on a bicycle who faces numerous obstacles while completing his paper route.
- *Zarlor Mercenary*, an original title for up to four players, which features an intergalactic shoot-out between players and aliens.
- *3-D Barrage*, similar to the orginal game *Breakout*, which uses a paddle to deflect a ball.
- *Road Blasters*, in which players drive a car and collect weapons to fight off enemies between 50 cities.
- *Rygar*, similar to the Techmo arcade hit which features a dynamic warrior in a variety of challenging battles.

Fall Sports Titles

Adding to its Lynx software line up, Atari will introduce several action-packed, sports-oriented titles this winter and in early 1991.

Football fans can enjoy sports excitement anywhere with Lynx's *NFL Super Bowl Football*, which allows up to four players to play an authentic Super Bowl match with the NFL team of their choice.

Additional four-player sports titles will include *Checkered Flag*, an original game in which players drive Formula 1 race cars; *Tournament Cyberball 2072*, an arcade hit from Atari Games, features robots as players in futuristic gameof football; and *World Cup Soccer*, a fast-paced game that captures the excitement of professional soccer.

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Atari Introduces 15 New Games for 7800 and 2600 Home Entertainment Systems

CHICAGO (June 2)--Atari Computer Corporation today announced 15 new software titles for the 7800 and 2600 home video entertainment systems at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show.

New games available this summer for the advanced 7800 include:

- *Ikari Warriors:* In this two-player action game, players become members of an elite combat squad on a mission behind enemy lines.
- *Fatal Run:* A futuristic game in which the player attempts to save humanity from radiation poisoning caused by the earth's collision with a comet. Players encounter a difficult journey as they race their weapon and armor-equipped car to deliver a life-saving vaccine.
- *Planet Smashers:* A space adventure featuring dynamic graphics and sound effects.
- *Alien Brigade:* An action-packed, combat shooting game that utilizes a joystick or light gun.
- *MotorPsycho:* This one-player motorcycle racing game offers four progressively difficult tracks featuring challenging ramps, hills, valleys, twists and turns.
- *BasketBrawl:* An inner-city basketball torunament where six players go all out. One or two players can play on the street, in a junkyard or on a rooftop.
- *Mean 18 Ultimate Golf:* A realistic simulation of Pebble Beach, one or two players take on the challenging roughs and water of the famous course.
- *Mat Mania Challenge:* In this exciting game, two players can wrestle head-to-head and execute such moves as the "sunset flip," "hammer drop," and the "clothesline." Wrestlers can fight in or out of the ring.
- *Electrocop:* The player of this game becomes Electrocop, a bio-technical blend of man and machine who travels through subways, sewers, rooftops and skyscrapers attempting to sweep the city streets clean of the evil menace.
- *Scrapyard Dog:* Players in search of a kidnapped dog travel through the worst part of town, fighting off rats and bottle-throwing thugs.

Additional titles to be released this fall for the 7800 include *Klax, Midnight Mutants*, and *Ninja Golf.*

New games available this fall for the 2600 are *Ikari Warriors, Fatal Run, MotoRodel*, and *Xenophobe.* Available this winter for the 2600 is *Klax.*

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Soviets and Atari Agree

Big Barter Agreement, Chips for Hardware

By Christopher Anderson

Cash-Poor Soviets

Russian experts may disagree, but for Atari, "perestroika" translates to "market opportunity." After largely striking out in the U.S. consumer and business marketplace, Atari is exploring the Soviet Union as a place to unload its low-end computers in exchange for chips and whatever else the cash-poor Soviets may be willing to barter.

Last month Atari co-sponsored the first Soviet Silicon Summit, a 10-day meeting between top Soviet science and high-technology officials and Silicon Valley business leaders. A week after the Bush-Gorbachev meeting in Washington, DC, the 15-man Soviet delegation to Silicon Valley repeated many of their leader's themes: The Soviet Union is short on hard currency, but there is plenty of good Soviet technology available at bargain prices if U.S. companies are interested.

Atari, for one, was interested. Even before the Summit began on June 4, Atari had already reportedly reached a deal to trade video games and other low-end computers for 2.5 million Soviet-made 256K memory chips. Although one of the top problems in the Soviet electronics industry is poor quality control, which is most apparent in the country's primitive semiconductor production facilities, 256K chips are considered low-tech enough to be a relatively safe bet. [Ed: Sam Tramiel is reported to have said at CES that though there were some problems with the initial shipment of chips, it may be merely a question of proper "packaging.")

Surplus Hardware

In search of further agreements at the meeting, Atari primarily pushed hardware that it had overproduced or had in surplus. But with diplomacy no doubt in mind, it refrained from pushing too hard. It had a banner and a small booth, at which a Portfolio, two 520 STFMs, and a box that once held a Lynx were displayed. Sales of the Portfolio have waned in recent months, and Atari is trying to get rid of its vast stocks of the current model before it introduces the next version, which is to have a 80-column screen. Atari vice president David Harris said that negotiations were in progress for additional trade agreements with the Soviets, but that it was too early to disclose their nature.

If Atari can get in on the ground floor, the Soviet Union represents an enormous--albeit somewhat sluggish--market for cheap computers. There are currently about 500,000 to 600,000 PCs in the Soviet Union, at least 500,000 less than called for in the most recent five-year economic plan. Although the plan calls for the production of 6.3 million new machines by 1995, Soviet production is still hamstrung by export restriction on Western chip-making technology and dismal economics at home.

Most of the computers produced in the Soviet Union are boxy IBM-compatible based on 8086 or 80286 technology, although there are still a large number of CP/M compatibles. About 100,000 computers, including clones of the Commodore 64 and the Apple II, are used in the home. Most home computers are 8-bit designs with cassette drives rather than floppies. A hard drive is prohibitively expensive.

250,000 This Year

The Soviet Union is expected to import as many as 250,000 computers from the West this year. Most will be AT-compatible machines, although as many as 8,000 Macintoshes could make their way in as well. Compatibility with an established standard is as important in the Soviet Union as it is here, but the dire condition of the ruble is likely to make the Soviets more willing to consider non-IBM alternatives like the ST if the price is right. And although Soviet workers are poorly paid--a Soviet XT clone cost 35,000 to 40,000 rubles, about 10 year's pay for an average worker--privitization is likely to eventually bring Soviet wages closer to international standards and could open their home computer market.

Tetris, the Exemplar

us computer companies exhibited an unusual entrepreneurial spirit at the Silicon Valley meeting, as they were working out trades involving everything from construction materials to leather processing plants and hotels--anything except for cash. Of course, in matters of urgency or dire need, the Soviets will resort to paying in real money, but the artificially low exchange rate of the ruble makes dollars hard to come by. Some Soviet lab chiefs were offering quality mathematicians and theoretical scientists in exchange for computers. Give U.S. computers, they said, and we will give you back great software. *Tetris*, the phenomenally successful Soviet computer game, was mentioned often.

Some other appeals were less refined. One Soviet education official in search of computers reminded a Silicon Valley firm that IBM has donated several dozen PCs to Soviet grade schools. "If a U.S. company wanted to improve its image, it could make such a contribution," he suggested. But U.S. businessmen don't appear to be losing sleep over their image in the usS.R. "We're not in the business of giving computers away," the U.S. executive said as he walked out.

Dropping Subsidies

As part of planned Soviet free-market reforms, 2,000-3,000 technical cooperatives, or small labs, will become part of the private sector in July, when new regulations take effect. That means that government subsidies are likely to drop, or cease altogether, Soviet officials explained. The science centers will soon be expected to earn their own keep, either by licensing the technology that has so far remained within the country, or by turning the technology into products, by themselves or with the help of outside companies. To do that, the labs need Western technology, especially computers and semiconductor production tools. But without hard cash, they can only offer basic research, collaborations, and commodities that are not in short supply.

For U.S. companies used to dealing in dollars, the idea of such barter is still somewhat foreign. Good will towards the Soviets is in plentiful supply, but concern for the bottom line makes "non-traditional payment" deals difficult. Adept Technology, a Silicon Valley robotics firm, recently turned down an offer to trade 500 robots for a shipment of caviar and vodka.

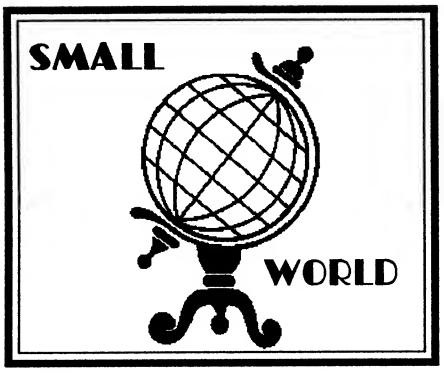
Although the commercial microelectronics industry in the Soviet Union lingers far behind the West, some basic semiconductor research, fed by military and space funding, has kept pace with the best U.S. labs. Research in electron-beam, x-ray and laser lithography techniques have produced microcircuits with less than 0.5 micron resolution, an impressive achievement, even by U.S. standards. And Soviet labs had 1-megabit DRAM chips in limited production before U.S. companies first produced their initial chip runs in 1986.

Some Skepticism

Yet many U.S. scientists at the Silicon Summit reacted to the Soviet claims with wait-and-see pragmatism." You certainly have to feel a little skeptical," says Nicholas Gralenski, staff scientist for Watkins-Johnson, a California high-tech company. "If the Soviet economy is so weak, how can their technology be strong? Basic science is fine, but converting basic science to technology can take 20 years." Like Atari and many other U.S. participants at the conference, he admits that he is more interested in the Soviet Union as a market than a possible research partner.

Although they may not have fully grasped the nuance of U.S. deal-making, the Soviets at the Silicon Summit made it clear that they had no intention of being taken for a ride. No matter how desperate they may be for hard currency, Soviets research centers are determined to avoid situations like that of a soft-contact lens polymer sold to Bausch and Lomb by the Czechoslovakian Academy of Science in the 1960s. Bausch and Lomb made a fortune on the deal, the Czech government took most of the one-time license fee, and the original lab received almost nothing. When Bausch and Lomb recently went back to the Eastern Bloc to license a natural collagen corneal shield from the Moscow Institute for Eye Microsurgery, it found a new sense of market savvy. The shield agreement sets royalties based on sales, rather than a block fee, and a sizable percentage of the money will return to the institute.

In general, the outlook for trade with the Soviet Union is encouraging, if a little hazy. "The legal structure and framework in the Soviet Union is changing as we speak," said Jeffrey Armstrong of Global Development Corporation, which sponsored the conference with Atari. "The rules are written by virtue of the deals that get done." But the will is there, and a good deal signed early could pay off in spades down the road, he said.



No Gloom Zone

by: Dave Small
(C) 1990

If you're looking for some "gloom and doom" writing about Atari Corporation, better skip to the next column.

I just don't feel like it's the end of the world for Atari. We're not "bailing out" of the Atari computer for the Mac or PC. We're not laying people off. In fact, the phone keeps ringing, the FAX keeps grunging FAX's out (there is not yet a verb for faxxing (Latin: "faxar, to fax"), so I have to describe the sound, and it goes grunnnnnge while FAX-ing), and everyone is busy enough at Gadgets to personally train Workaholics Anonymous classes.

In one paragraph, the 68030 is coming along--hey, Spectre now works under the 030, now where's a TT to test it on?--MegaTalk is talking along (at a mere 1.8 megabaud if you try), Spectre is getting new versions (editable foreign-language menus and stuff), and it's life in the fast lane in general. Our major problems at Gadgets are the relativistic effects. For instance, Doug merely *seems* to be stretching out in the line of travel, and Sandy merely *seems* to be talking slowly; it's all related to speed of light travel.

So now let's talk about Gloom and Doom, Inc., a pet peeve of mine in Atari journalism.

Gloom and Doom, Inc.

Sometimes I feel there's this one writer in the Atari ST world. He specializes in Gloom and Doom editorial writing. He rewrites the same column over and over, selling it to various Atari magazines, under various pseudonyms. Its various titles are, "Is It The End?," "The End of Atari U.S.?," "Is Atari All Washed Up?," etc. You've seen 'em too.

Since literally before the Tramiels took over Atari, this same tired column has been hashed, rehashed, salted, peppered, reheated, microwaved, and rerun. It makes *Star Trek: The New Age* look original. ("I feel ... pain!")

We in the Atari USA community have a number of monthly magazines and user group newsletters featuring Gloom&Doom articles, weekly on-line magazines featuring G&D, and so on. This depressing torrent of comment can only be matched by the CBS Evening News:

"Good Evening. I'm Dan Rather. The world is ending. Drugs are rampant. No one cares about apathy. Donald Trump's girlfriend ..."

Now Atari has made some poor moves, true, and they've done some incompetent stuff. *So what?*

Atari is being held to a *completely unrealistic standard*. How unrealistic? Well, we need a baseline, so let's check out their competition.

The Competition

Apple. Apple releases the Mac II. The standard word processor, *MacWrite 4.5*, does not work on it. *Excel* does not work on it. *Microsoft Word* does not work on it, either. These programs are much of the reason to even *buy* a stupid Mac to begin with, so the companies have to rush out new versions of the programs for the II. Imagine the Gloom&Doom editorials if Atari did that!

Atari is ONE BUILDING in Sunnyvale. Individual departments are a few cubicles within that building.

Apple is damn near all of Cupertino, a sort of empire down south on De Anza boulevard. Each department has its own building.

But Apple can't get it any righter than Atari.

Apple releases the LaserWriter NTX. The hard disk port only works with a few hard disks (that Apple sells) because of use of obscure and rarely supported SCSI commands. Oooooh, imagine if Atari did that!

Apple releases the IIfx, at $10,000 without a keyboard, monitor, or hard disk. (But wow, it's a cool looking motherboard.) It is universally and instantly named the "IIfx--means Too F**king Expensive."

Apple releases a 17 pound "portable" arm-stretcher, *choke*, without backlighting, har har, that BREAKS the popular Mac MIDI interfaces, chuckle chuckle, and uses $500 4-Meg RAM chips instead of the $70 1-meg chips, haw haw haw. And they charge 8 grand for it. *Moan.*

Imagine the editorials if Atari pulled that. Hey, the STacy ain't perfect, but at least I have a chance of affording it without a bank loan.

IBM. IBM releases the IBM PC-junior computer. Supposed to be a "home computer," IBM deliberately cripples the machine with a joke keyboard, low RAM, and so forth, to prevent competition with the regular PC. Three new magazines for the Jr. debut, then fold. IBM ends up unable to even give them away. It's regarded as one of the great flops in computer history.

Imagine if Atari released the PC–Jr. keyboard and unexpandableRAM. "Atari doesn't care about its users!"

Then, IBM releases the IBM AT. Yessir, the new powerhouse 286 computer featuring 8–Mhz ... uh ... 6–Mhz clock. 6? This came as news to the development engineers, whose specs said 8 Mhz, and whose schematics *to this day* say 8 Mhz. At the last minute, some marketing dweeb forced a 6–Mhz crystal into the AT to cripple it––we wouldn't want to compete with our minicomputer line! And they even modified the ROM to prevent putting in a faster crystal. (Thank heavens for hackers––they promptly built boards to bypass the ROMs and up the clock rate). Nowadays, you couldn't give away a 6–Mhz 286 machine––try 16 or 20 Mhz.

Imagine if Atari deliberately crippled the clock rate of the ST? Oh, the editorials!

IBM and Sears release a horrid, awful online "service" called Prodigy. Backed up by a marketing campaign designed for the Complete Idiot, so slow it's incredibly irritating, and (sigh) probably designed not to compete with IBM's telecomm service, it should singlehandedly prevent the Common Man from seeing any benefit whatever in online services until at least 2020. ("Yeah, going 'online'? I checked that out in 1990... Prodigy. It was slow and clunky. Never again.")

Imagine if Atari released a telecomm setup as slow as Prodigy, with, what, 40 characters per line, ugly 36 point fonts, and scrolling ads at the bottom to waste more of your time. I can see it now ... "It's the end of Atari!"

Amiga. The Amiga Workbench (sort of their Desktop). Except ... heh, most programs don't even WORK from the "Work"bench. I forget (and don't really care) what the official reason is for this atrocity ("we didn't bundle an icon"); the truth is, if you don't learn a WEIRD Command Line Interface language, sort of a screwed–up MS–DOS, you can't run the Amiga stuff you want to.

All the boinking balls in the world aren't going to matter a tinker's damn to a soul trying to get his Amiga working with that ol' intuitive Workbench––and no icons for programs. ("What's a CLI, Sally? I can't figger this computer out. Let's give it to the neighbor's kids.")

MS–DOS. Let's continue with MS–DOS, the operating system from hell? Its guts bear roots from the days where floppies were 8 inches big and held 241K, single–sided, single–density. Instead of being a people–friendly operating system, it bows, grovels, and scrapes to the computer, aiding the computer in every way, and hacking off the people who have to "interface" to it. Quick, is the job of a Disk Operating System to be easy for a computer, or easy for a user? Particularly nowadays, when there is so much thundering horsepower in a computer that tremendous user interfaces can work without slowing things down.

Mac Interface. If you think I'm more wild about the "cuddly, cute" Mac interface, wrongo. Apple HAD it right. Since then, they've screwed up a fundamentally simple idea with stupidity like Font/DA Mover, differing System revisions, Installer, Laser Prep (aaargh!), making it necessary to have a "guru" around to get your Mac set up and running. Sheesh! Sandy and I have had Macs since 1984, and we still get the "Why did it print everything in Courier Font?" laserwriting problems cropping up. And Multicrasher... err, Multifinder. SIGH! I challenge ANYONE to set up a Mac II unaided. Period.

This situation is pathetic. Computer makers everywhere seem determined to make their machine hostile, unfriendly, easy for the computer, hard for the user, add screwups, crashes, and more complexity to each release, and force everyone to know at least one Guru.

A less intelligent person would call it a conspiracy to keep computer people, among the most antisocial and ill–mannered of things walking on two legs (they make the Mummy and the 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T look *gracious*) employable and employed. "It's a plot!"

A more intelligent person knows to ALWAYS assume incompetence before seeing a plot. Even when there is a plot (say, crippling a machine so it doesn't compete), that's still incompetence; for instance, their "marketing" came back to haunt IBM. They promptly lost the incredibly lucrative micro market, while hot competitors like Compaq won it.

Let's try a FAIR comparison about Atari, okay? Look at what the competition has done––then measure Atari against it. They haven't done so bad after all, have they?

Or––if you measure other companies by the impossibly high standards the Gloom & Doom boys do, all you can do is laugh ... or cry.

What Atari HAS Done

Now let's look at what they HAVE done, with a small staff and on a low budget.

Atari put out a laser printer you could afford, and used onboard computer system RAM for imaging instead of making you pay mucho bucks for it to sit in the laser printer, being used once in a while. This is exactly how it should be done. And the print quality is superb; it outdoes an Apple printer anytime. (We know! Geeze, if anyone should know, it's us!) When software uses the SLM804 (say, *Calamus* or *Pagestream*), it gives really excellent quality output.

True, GDOS didn't work out, but if you know about DRI and Atari,you may know that there's plenty of

blame to go around. No, the Diablo emulator isn't perfect, and bub, until YOU write a printer emulator, don't get on Dave Staugus' case; it is near impossible to write one that matches every vaguary of the Diablo.

So what credit does Atari get? The G&D articles gripe about the Diablo software and GDOS (which you can buy fixed from Codehead as G+PLUS), because, in truth, the hardware is so darned good to complain about. But because they've preconcieved that the Atari world is ending (from 1984 on), they have to find something to complain about.

Let's continue. Atari put out a computer system with an 8-Mhz 68000, which is very powerful, and was the first to bring one in for less than a dollar per megabyte (made the cover of *Byte* for the 1040 at under $1,000). An 8-Mhz 68000 is a screamer to anyone, and they did this back in 1985, when 1.79 Mhz 8-bit 6502's with 64K RAM were hot, and 6-Mhz 286's were just sexier than Cheryl Tiegs. (Remember that whizbang *1-Mhz* Apple II?)

What do the columnists say? The editorials complain about Atari being late with the STacy/STE/TT. While I can share their frustration, I wonder how many of these All Knowing, All Wise columnists could even design a power supply, much less custom VLSI chips.

Atari put a hard disk system in this computer that other computer makers can only envy. It's so fast it can handle an absolute maxxed-out hard disk (called, "1:1 interleave"). On IBM machines, the hard disk has to wait for the computer; and you'll laugh hysterically if you ever see the Amiga using the hard disk (you can *watch* as it plots one icon, then another icon, then another icon, with a noticeable delay between them. It takes forever to just plot the stupid desktop. I own an Amiga and hard disk, I know.)

And Atari did it with their own DMA chip, thus bypassing the industry-expensive NCR 8350 SCSI controller. That cost savings was passed on to you.

Go up to an IBM owner. Say "1:1 interleave." They'll drool. IBM PC owners use 1:3. Mac Plus owners use 1:3. Your ST, out of the box, is three times faster on the hard disk!--and probably three times cheaper.

What credit does Atari get? The editorials lament that Atari's SH204 has a minor bug in the controller PAL--not about how amazingly fast it is. Or about the 40-folder bug in the file system, which is NOT Atari's fault--it came with GEMDOS from DRI.

Atari put out a color display that is very, very good. 640 x 200 graphics in a sharp monitor are no slouch. Compare this to the Amiga, which basically is TV oriented and thus very limited. (TV's graphics are really poor. TV gets away with it because the eye "fills in" much of the lost detail. But in computer images, the eye can't do that--say, while word processing.)

And in the biggest marketing double-think I can think of, this is called an *advantage!* "Why, the Amiga can genlock to the TV!" Hey, wonderful. 50 people can do TV commercials with it. The rest of us have to suffer along with low resolution.

The editorials complain that Atari didn't put an RF Modulator (to hook to TV's) in some ST's. Geeze, who cares. This is a computer, not a high powered Nintendo! *You cannot do high-res graphics on a TV!*

Atari put out a *superb*, 640 x 400 monochrome monitor that other people still find hard to beat, five years later. IBM put out progressively incompatible monitor "standards"--CGA, EGA, VGA--which retired a whole generation of programmers early. Apple struggled and stretched and strained and managed to put a 512 x 342 monitor in their Mac--30% smaller.

The editorials focus on the fact that Atari can't ship enough of them, not how fine they are.

And this gets even better. Since all video is memory based, you have to dedicate some part of memory access to video, taking it away from the CPU. The Mac chops around 25% from their CPU; the Atari chops almost nothing from the CPU, and has a larger screen to begin with!

Atari had the brains to put a MIDI interface into the computer. Heck, it was only one more 6850 chip and some opto-isolators and 5-pin MIDI connectors. But this brought *affordable* power to the musician. On the Mac, after you're done selling your son into slavery to pay for the machine, you then have to get a MIDI adaptor box, that kinda sorta makes the Mac talk MIDI ... but if you talk to the right people, they'll whisper to you that the timing is off, and the ST is much better at time-critical stuff. "But don't quote me on that, Dave, Apple would get mad."

Apple is said to have completely broken ALL MIDI on its new Portable. Giant leap ahead in its public relations with musicians, who desperately need portable machinery. Apple's spokesperson then vaguely mentioned "a few" programs she wouldn't name "had minor" trouble with the serial port, "but it was being fixed." Sure it was. Apple couldn't resist changing the serial port, and the MIDI kludge someone came up with originally breaks when you do that. Nice beta testing, guys.

The editorials scream that Atari hasn't shipped the STacy in mass quantities yet, or about the FCC hassles Atari's lived through. I am very, very up-to-date on FCC regs and have been through the wringer. The editorials generally do not know what they're talking about-

and some dweeb columnist thinks he is an Instant Expert on FCC regs because he talked to an FCC secretary. What a joke! Life doesn't work that way.

I can go on and on. The truth is, Atari don't get no respect. They've made some of the most incredible, envelope-pushing achievements out there, in particular with regards to price. Their computers are less expensive and in many cases, do more than the competition. Atari makes as many mistakes as the competition--so what?

That's the truth. The editorials keep talking about The End of Atari and so forth. That's far more dramatic, but it's rot. It's a lot easier to blame this formless "Atari" entity than to try to sit down and do it better. *You* try buying a basically bankrupt company, shrinking it to a livable size, holding off creditors while hustling a new computer out the door to make some money.

And if you succeed in giving people amazing computer power for less money, you'll get nitpicked at for every minor, picky fault possible. Sure, you'll make some mistakes. But no one will say, hey, so did Apple and IBM and Commodore, and often worse mistakes than Atari. And often the mistakes are simply not your fault--some contractor screws up code, you have a shipping deadline, and that's the breaks.

You try to do it as well as Atari has, by any fair measurement. It's like the old saying writers have: God invented blank paper to prove to writers how hard it was to make up a universe.

How's About Gadgets, Then?

Yeah, this is Dave Small, Gadgets by Small, right? We're On The Ball, better than that screwed-up Atari, right? Sure.

We just shipped Spectre 2.65 a few months ago, free, to every customer who bothered to mail in their warranty card. (About 90% do--BECAUSE WE SEND THEM STUFF IF THEY DO. Other companies get 10% registration. They don't send anything but ads. What is wrong with this picture? What is right with this picture? There will be a quiz at the end of the class.)

And in Spectre 2.65, which we checked up, down, and sideways, color monitors broke. Totally. Flatly. We're still not sure who miscommunicated how, but the bug slipped in during a late night fix for Pagemaker, and neither us nor our Beta testers caught it.

Man, were we embarrassed. What saved us is that nearly all Spectre users use mono monitors, and 2.65 was *free*--it's hard to complain about something breaking when it's a free gift.

Can you imagine if Atari shipped TOS 1.4 and color didn't work at all? I can read the editorials now. "Doom is at hand; It Is The Apocalpyse."

Then we have the Advertising Issue. Everyone's favorite Atari solution to a problem--say, world hunger--is Advertise. Atari must Advertise. Now bear in mind we are dealing with a public brainwashed into thinking that PC Clones and IBM are the Answer. Apple spends millions upon millions on its Macintosh ads, trying to break into that market. Commodore ran expensive TV ads. And month after month, Apple and Commodore do not penetrate the market.

So, yup, I'll stand up here and say the problem is not Atari. The problem is the market. Atari is not the only one that cannot sell a machine because it is not a PC Clone. Apple, Commodore, and lots of other companies cannot "crack the office market" either, even with superb machinery.

Lots of reasons. One is nobody ever got fired for specifying "IBM" on a purchase order. (But try to get a Mac in the door! Woooooo). IBM also has a good relationship with most large companies. And good ad people.

You want Atari to advertise? Okay, *be more specific*. Target WHAT market, WHERE, and WHY? Funny, no one ever fills in that part. And tell me why they should expect to be more successful than Apple at getting into offices and so forth.

In Germany, where this IBM-slave mentality doesn't exist, the ST does exceedingly well, based on its merits.

Finally, we have the Dream On mentality. This says, "our software developers are Moving On to the IBM or Macintosh programming worlds."

True, some are--and wow, they are in for a shock.

Big Fish, Little Pond

See, the Atari computers are sort of a small pond. For instance, Gadgets by Small is a big fish in that small pond. There's plenty of food and life is good for us; we even make new products, thus recycling the money given us for new stuff for you.

If you do something in the ST market, it'll be noticed. If you do something good, it'll REALLY be noticed; it's like a small town with the nationwide (really, planetwide) networks, magazines, and so forth. One good hack like Twister gets across the planet in less than a day, and becomes a standard. It's still possible to keep up with ALL that is happening with the ST world.

This is bad?

But, some of the fish whisper that there's MORE food in the ocean next to the pond, and convince themselves to jump. The sirens on the IBM and Mac world are calling to them, and they can't resist.

They go into the ocean, and find that while there's more food,

there's a heck of a lot more fish. And there are sharks that eat fish. And them whales that eat LOTS of food.

People come to me and say, "We're moving to the Mac world." I say, that's nice, and think, Dream On. I mean, jeeze, there are 500 megabytes of public domain programs for the Mac good enough to get edited into a PD CD-ROM library. There are GIGABYTES of IBM PD programs, many of them representing years of talented programming effort.

They haven't made a buck. They've been dumped into shareware. That ocean is a cold, cold place where a fish can live and die without notice.

Conclusion

Several conclusions.

Atari is being judged by ridiculous, idealistic standards, and it's not fair. Other companies are not judged as harshly as Atari, and compared fairly, Atari's done pretty well. Sure, they've goofed; but sure, they've also given out more computer power for the price than anyone else. I can stand that, compared to companies that goof and charge out the nose.

Developers feeling the lure of other markets should get a reality check. TRY doing a Mac program and see if anyone cares, or will try to sell it. Ditto with PC market. (That's a pun).

And, if only speaking for our company here, we are doing just fine. The dream's alive for us. And we're making other dreams happen now, because so many of you believed in us; we have some extremely cool stuff on the way that will blow your mind.

I'd like to wish you all the best of summers, thank you for reading *Current Notes* and the ramblings I put in here, and realize this: I've written this column for the longest time I've ever written for ANY magazine ever, I'm happy with it, and plan to keep on doing it indefinitely.

All is not gloom and doom.

See you next time!

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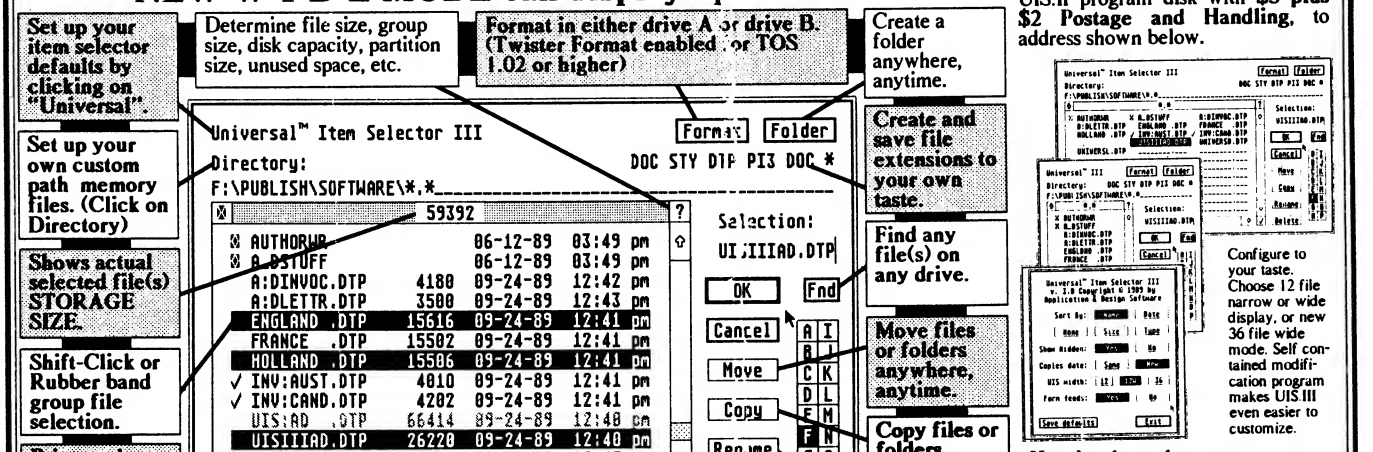

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The Junkyard Pussycat

by John Barnes

Atari Users Uniting?

A couple of acquaintances recently pointed the Pussycat toward something called the "Atari Users' Association." A quick perusal of *ST Report* and a quick download of the information file from the GEnie library were enough to convince the Pussycat that this might be worth checking into.

It turned out that the group is under the leadership of one Derek C. Signorini, from Pittsburgh, PA. Tom Parry, a close friend of Mr. Signorini's, and Jon Clarke, an Atari activist from New Zealand, also help out.

Charter and Goals

The first paragraph of the group's charter states that "The Atari User's Association, or AUA, is an organization formed to unite the Atari ST community under one common name, thus giving the Atari community collective bargaining power and a central source of information and support."

An extract of the AUA's statement of its goals lists the following:

1) To promote the Atari ST computer and every aspect of its use.

2) To unite the entire community as one world wide user group comprising individual users, user groups, and user group members.

3) To encourage software and hardware development for the Atari ST by supporting developers and their efforts.

4) To support and promote shareware software development and to encourage independent software developers to continue in their efforts.

5) To combat software piracy.

6) To become a vast source of information for the Atari ST community including user group listings, BBS listings, shareware library listings, and product listings.

When the Pussycat first saw the promotional literature for the AUA, he felt that this might be just another attempt by someone to put out a magazine and run a shopping service. A little checking around revealed that this was not the case, and that the present leaders of the AUA are serious about promoting the welfare of the typical Atari user.

As evidence of their seriousness, the group states that it is actively pursuing membership in the Software Publishers' Association. Piracy is a burning issue to them.

What's Happening?

Since the Pussycat has not figured out how to get onto F-Net, he cannot really assess the breadth of support that the organization enjoys. Mr Signorini claims that the AUA has about 700 members at the present time. Interestingly enough, he states that the great majority of AUA members do not list a user group affiliation on their membership forms. About 70 percent of the AUA's membership comes from the eastern United States, mainly from Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. Advertising in the ST Report online magazine has been their main source of new members. Mr Signorini states that 99.9 percent of the members use modems.

While the AUA has remained largely invisible to U.S. user groups, it does claim to have obtained affiliations from a number of international groups in New Zealand (which is purported to have 20 groups), Europe, N. Africa, and the Middle East.

The first press release that the Pussycat downloaded made prominent mention of the Atari Elite, a Pittsburgh area ST users' group. The Atari Elite achieved a certain notoriety by maintaining a rental library of commercial software. This was a blunder on their part, as many people regard this as tantamount to group supported piracy. Unfortunately, this activity overshadowed the Elite's good accomplishments and they took a lot of heat when the crowd gathered in Pittsburgh had to find someone to blame for the poor sales record of the PACE show. The finger pointing may not have been entirely justified, but hard feelings remain.

Mr. Signorini certainly feels some anguish here because he got a lot of help from the Elite when he needed it, and he probably feels bad over the positions that some of his friends are in.

The AUA had already severed its connection with Elite before the PACE show in Pittsburgh in May and the best thing to do is to ignore those references in the old literature.

At the present time the AUA's energies appear to be mainly devoted to recruiting new members and getting their publication program rolling. Their publication plans include a disk magazine named *AUA NewsBriefs* as well as a printed newsletter to be distributed four times a year. Derek's five years of experience as editor of the *Electronic Chronicles Disk Magazine* should stand him in good stead with AUA NewsBriefs. The premier issue of the newsletter was used as publicity material at the PACE show.

The AUA is currently putting together a package to introduce itself to the user group community. They are also looking for dealers who will promote their cause in exchange for advertising in AUA publications. Free

advertising in their publications is also, for the time being, their main means of supporting user groups and Atari shows.

The AUA has been under Mr. Signorini's wing since the fall of 1989. At 25 years of age Mr. Signorini is young enough and idealistic enough to believe in his cause. He works as a pharmacist, with a side business in programming and consulting. He is a registered Atari developer working on point of sale software and a couple of other utilities. He feels that his experience as a campus organizer at Duquesne University helps him in leading the AUA. With a full time job, a newly built house, a part time business, and a wife, Derek is spread pretty thin.

The Road Ahead

The most laudable goal that the AUA has set for itself is to become a central information resource to the Atari community. The AUA has shown steady growth, but must bring its light out from under the proverbial bushel soon if it is to become THE worldwide spokesman for all Atari users, as seems to be implied in its goal statement. It needs greater depth in its body of workers, it needs a clearly spelled out agenda, it needs visibility, and it needs credibility.

As this column pointed out in June of 1989, an association of Atari users that is to have the kind of leverage that the AUA wants, needs a rigorous and professional approach to its work. The Atari world has more than enough publishing enterprises. If the AUA wants to get on with its work it should forgo routine publishing and work on establishing a regular presence in the existing Atari media, both here and abroad.

Special publications such as user group lists, dealer lists, publications, a membership directory, a catalog of public domain and shareware tools, a database of vendors and products would all be welcome (and perhaps profitable) products.

Providing qualified assistance to show organizers in the form of experts for seminars and demonstrations would be another good way to make a highly visible contribution without poaching on the existing user groups.

If the AUA can show that it is capable of fielding solid soldiers in the guerilla warfare that is needed to keep the Atari community alive it will gain all of the credibility it needs, thereby earning the right to speak for all Atari users.

Developer Cannibalism

Some while back the Junkyard Pussycat became concerned over what he saw as "developer cannibalism". While the Pussycat has been known to spill a little blood himself, he is bothered by noise and hype.

There seem to be too many products in the marketplace that do the same thing. How many ways are there to speed up screen displays? How many tools do we need for organizing our desktops and desk accessory menus? How many different ways are there to back up a hard drive onto floppies? How many command line interpreters do we really need? Why do we have have to have all of the ballyhoo about the virtues of one product over another?

How many times does the wheel have to be reinvented? How much of a living can one expect to make with a product that is designed to replace someone else's? It seems that there is too much effort being put into too many look-alike products and it seems unlikely that people will be willing to buy what they have already bought, even if the first product is worn out. Atari users are, after all, notoriously loath to discard anything that is worn out.

After a bit of digging, the furry philosopher has become convinced that all of this competition is for the best in the long run, even if it is brutal in its short term consequences.

The scope of competition is narrow because the Atari marketplace is small. If 100,000 ST computers have been sold into the U.S. marketplace over the past five years, it is safe to say that 50,000 of them are gathering dust because their owners have moved on to other things. Of the 50,000 remaining perhaps 20,000 owners can be persuaded to buy some new piece of software. The developer who wants to eke out any kind of a living must design his product so that it appeals to as many of those 20,000 as possible. Sales on the order of 2,000 for an Atari product is quite good; 5,000 is sensational (for software other than games). This leads to a plethora of applications that almost everyone would find useful: desktops, accessory managers, software accelerators, and backup utilities.

The first version of one of these products almost never fills the bill. There are bugs, there are incompatibilities, there is poor design. Another programmer may spot these and feel that he has a better idea for a solution. Working out that solution requires creativity. Trying to sell it is the essence of capitalism. As long as the competition remains fair there can be no real objection. The replacement of inferior products by superior ones is a reasonable definition of progress. Hard work to fix products or to keep them ahead of the competition is a reasonable symptom of productivity. Competition, therefore, can bring out admirable qualities. It is better to let evolution take its course than it is to attempt to protect anachronisms.

Hyperbole also has its place in this struggle. Given that a follow-on to a product has to come out from under the shadow of its predecessor, there is a need to attract attention. Hyperbole can be justified if it meets the claims. Unfortunately, much of the hyperbole that we see in the Atari marketplace is unjustified. Consumers have learned this and they are reacting with a certain wariness. Is this wonderful new product really going to cure everything that is wrong with the old one?

The variety of software available for the Macintosh and the MS-DOS platforms is a consequence of the

fact that these markets are so large that they can be subdivided into a number of niches. The entire Atari market is hardly as big as the least of these. We should never expect to see esoteric programs like *Mathematica*, high power CAD applications, presentation graphics, laboratory data acquisition packages, and all of the rest.

Dave Small's success with the Spectre line is further proof of the importance of niches because this product enables the user to break out of the Atari niche into a richer arena, that of the Macintosh. The marked interest in pc ditto II was a similar story until someone came along with a more elegant, even if more costly, solution in the form of the Supercharger. Hardware products are a little more promising because they are harder to pirate.

Atari has had some niche success in its MIDI experiences. Interestingly enough, the real diversity of product in this niche is largely a consequence of the existence of a standard, the MIDI protocol itself, that allows gadgets from many manufacturers to talk to each other. Atari has to stay on its toes in this environment, however, because the power users are already finding that products from Commodore, Apple, and the MS-DOS world are offering more power.

Talking to the Rest of the World

The niche issue is just as important on the hardware side as it is on the software side.

Atari's external interfaces, with the exception of the printer and modem ports, represent a non-standard, closed architecture, wherein external devices must link into a special SCSI interface, the cartridge port, or directly onto the motherboard. This is a principal reason that Atari Ethernet connectivity is so expensive as to preclude its acceptance. As manufacturers for other platforms develop cheap video interfaces, digital and analog I/O boards, onboard FAX modems, scanners, and screen display controllers, Atari users are effectively cut off from these applications. Atari hardware of this sort must be more expensive than comparable hardware for other platforms because it will be difficult to obtain the economies of scale needed to manufacture these products cheaply.

Atari's new high end products (the TT line) make an attempt to address this problem through limited application of the VME bus, but it is doubtful that this standard, which is most heavily used in the scientific and engineering environment, will work its way into the office or the home.

What of the Macintosh's specialized hardware? This was a real problem up until quite recently. Only with the Macintosh II and its relatively open architecture, as represented by the NuBus, did the Apple machines begin to invade laboratories and offices in any strength. The niche represented by the original architecture was simply too small to allow for growth. Early users did, however, find that they could fend off obsolescence by replacing memory and motherboards. With attractive color displays and a variety of options for image processing and other interaction with the real world (especially including Ethernet) the Mac is, for the time being, able to present itself as a serious workstation. The gurus of Sun, Hewlett Packard, and Silicon Graphics are now beginning to zero in on this marketplace. If they can tame UNIX so that it is usable by an average technician or office worker we may see Apple struggling for its life.

Hardware specialization is not the only reason that the Atari niche has remained small. A speciallized operating system makes it difficult to write programs that exploit the user interface. Some programmers who think they have mastered the game say it is easy, but using GEM does require that yesterday's programmers learn new tricks. Porting applications from other platforms is not as simple as it sounds, nor is it easy for an Atari developer to make a few more bucks by rewriting his code for a different operating system.

Developers like Tom Marks (the author of Phasar) , and the Versasoft team (dBMAN), who have enjoyed some success with this, try to keep things simple and to use a highly disciplined approach to writing applications. Reports are starting to come in of other outfits that have taken aim on the other markets. It is still too early to tell whether they can succeed at this.

The Wild World of Atari

The Atari world is like frontier America in the latter part of the 19th century. Far from everything, short of water, and full of dangers for the unwary. A place where only the bold or the foolhardy dare venture.

As Atari developers sally forth into this wild world with their Resource Construction Sets and programming manuals in hand with visions of "there's gold in them thar hills" dancing in their heads, they face many dangers.

The sheer grueling labor of tilling the soil is the first one. As mentioned above, programming in GEM represents a change in orientation from the comfortable character-oriented schemes of the past. There are no artificial intelligence aids or CASE (Computer Assisted Software Engineering) tools to aid the Atari programmer.

The second danger comes from the new kid who comes to town itching to test out his hot gun hand. When everybody is writing the same thing there is a good chance that somebody has already thought out his own version of the product. He may or may not have implemented it as well as the first guy to publish. The final victory belongs to the one who is still standing when the shooting dies down. The townspeople are caught in the middle. The best thing they can do is stay indoors while the bullets are flying. The people at Softrek who did Turbo ST learned this to their chagrin when Quick ST II came out.

This process is *natural selection*. Fortunately for the consumer, the final product is usually pretty good, and the victorious gunslinger gets a chance to catch

his breath and move on to something else. The wild west did have a sort of code regarding fairness in these gun battles. The computer world has yet to devise one, so that the outcome is not always completely fair.

Wild territory is typically rife with rustlers and similar bandits. The marshall is usually busy somewhere else, so that when the thieves ride off to post their booty on the nearest pirate BBS, the damage is already done. Some ranchers are learning to brand their cattle, thereby giving themselves a breathing space from the less tenacious varmints.

Snake oil salesmen are another hazard. These folks come along and offer to take the chore of bottling your elixir off your hands for a cut of the action. They are known to abscond before paying up and the late deliveries aggravate dealers to the point where they stop peddling. The best way to handle this one is to sell the stuff from the back of your own wagon.

One way to get a little safety in the wild west is to build yourself a cabin off in the mountains somewhere and tend your own herd of sheep. The Atari marketplace has niche products like these, but these guys do it more for pride of authorship than to make a living. They're happy if they recover their advertising costs.

Obsolescence is another hazard. The repeating rifle is a far more efficient tool than a muzzle-loader. The developers who keep their product up to date can expect to last somewhat longer than those who are reluctant to retool. Unfortunately, the Atari world has seen too many craftsmen who just could not keep up with the times. *Publisher ST* is one notorious example.

The final hazard that I am going to list here is poverty. Frontier areas are perennially strapped for cash. Much of the trade is barter. The clients of the local general store soon find that prices like $30 for an alternative desktop, $25 for a hard disk backup utility, $15 for a screen accelerator, $15 for a replacement file selector, $15 for a boot manager, and so on soon add up to real dollars. Add in the cost of periodic upgrades to keep the stuff working properly and people start learning to make do with what they have.

We are beginning to see this frontier existence take its toll as some of the early homesteaders abandon their ranches and head for lusher pastures.

Let's hope that the entrepreneurs and the townspeople who stay behind after the frontier is tamed can derive enough satisfaction that we won't have Atari ghost towns all over the landscape.

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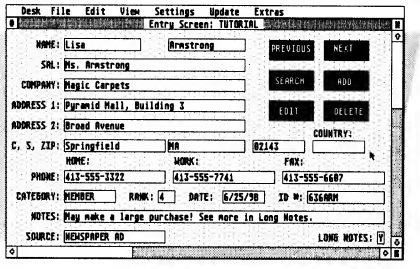

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Notes From the Coat Pocket

by David G. Grace -- U.S. Special Agent

I was driving west on Interstate 70, about to cross from Pennsylvania into West ByGod Virginia. It was a cool, clear morning and traffic was light. I was making good time on my trip to Wheeling. I was dropping off my old partner and picking up my new one in the same trip. I hoped the new one would be as compatible as the last. We'd been together since 1976 in New Jersey, but we were to finally part upon his retirement. We'd been together nearly as long as my wife and I, maybe longer if you count hours rather than years. We'd been through a few scrapes together. I'd done some things I wouldn't normally do, knowing that if it went sour, my backup was there, ready and dependable. His replacement was black and brand new, but highly touted. There would be some additional training before and after he was assigned to me full time.

We were meeting at the Wheeling Police Department's riverside training building. As I reached for the directions inside my coat, I accidently bumped my old partner's butt. Smiling, I went into my best Mae West impersonation, "Is that a pistol in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me?" He was as quiet as usual, always letting his imposing look do his communicating. I hoped his replacement would be the same way. My coat pocket was stuffed full of notes, including phone messages, things to do lists and a rather large group of computer notes. Not notes on how to use them, but on what to write about them. The size of the wad told me it was time to get serious about writing another article.

I try to make a note of good ideas for an article and many people offer suggestions. They're most often one liners, not the kernel of a good article. Of course, a good article can be full of one liners, though the opposite isn't always true. But the coat pocket is getting so heavy, I'm beginning to list to one side. Before I capsize, I need to throw some loose baggage overboard. I want to encourage people with ideas, so I better start using some. At the risk of sounding like a (hopefully good) stand up comedian, I'll now dump out the remainder of the pocket. As some of the ideas are my originals, I've decided not to share the By Line. If you contributed something to this effort, you can have the satisfaction of knowing your idea made it into print.

Flash in the Pan

My first note is a reminder to apologize for the reference in my last article to my appearance in the series pilot of ABC television's "Equal Justice." Oh, I was in it all right, but you needed an Evelyn Woods speed watching degree to catch me. After filming for over three days, I expected more. I'm a member of two user groups. The Pittsburgh Atari Computer Enthusiasts showed a video of the one scene of mine that survived the cutting room floor, thanks to President Bruce Markey. I wasn't at the meeting, but I heard it was rather pathetic, with the backing up of the tape over and over so everyone was sure to see me. I understand that an informal straw poll was held at the break: 40% never saw me, 30% thought I'd deserved an Emmy (but only if awarded posthumously) and 29% were still retching in the rest rooms. Only 1% wanted my autograph (thanks Martha). As a humanitarian gesture, the Westmoreland Atari Computer Organization refused to inflict a copy of the tape on its members, opting to bulk erase it instead. If you were one of those who sat through the two hour flick to catch me, you can take some consolation in knowing you weren't alone. I had managed to notify virtually EVERY person I have EVER known! I'm now filming a new movie for theater release with a bigger part, but nothing more goes into print until I see the edited version.

Squint GCR

I'm honored to have had an Atari Community leader like Dave Small spend nearly two full, though rambling, pages in *Current Notes* supporting me. His advice was very interesting, something like "the best defense is a good offense." My only criticism was that Whatshername read it and now thinks he's funnier than I am. Before that, she had only thought he was more intelligent, prolific and rich. She may go to the next D.C. show just to meet him. I tried to meet him at the last one, but he was too busy making a fortune off his emulators for the Apple Macintosh. Apple, of course, is a rather extensive software format for which there is no adequate hardware. I'm finally moving up to an ST, and I'd buy one of his emulators to make it run Mac software, if I could only figure out why I'd want it to. The rumor is the next Small emulator is to be called "Squint GCR," for those Apple Purists who MUST get absolute 100% emulation. It slows the ST down 20% and shrinks the screen by 30%.

More on Emulators

Speaking of emulators, I hope they are able to work out the bugs in *pc ditto II*, the IBM emulator. Some consider it a pretty serious design error when you make an add-on which may require cutting away parts of the computer to get it inside. I'm told that pc ditto III, now in the planning stages, is so large that the ST is mounted inside the emulator. I hear there is now an Amiga emulator for use on the ST. It's a hardware attachment to the drive, slowing it down until load time to run time is a 5 to 1 ratio. A software ST emulator for use on the Amiga is said to have been released for Beta testing last week. There is no word yet as to whether it works, as the program is still loading. The development of a cartridge version of a Commodore emulator, for use on the Atari 8-bit, was dropped for lack of interest.

No Bashing Here

I see that there is a revival of the "let's not do any Atari bashing" pleas hitting the letters to the editor section of many publications. I wonder if any of them were written by former employees of *Atari Explorer*, now that they have more time on their hands. I suppose I could be accused of Atari bashing in the past, but my complaint has been almost exclusively with the marketing, or lack of same, of the machines. I sold my Atari stock, fodder for an article in itself, in order to have the cashfor the purchase of the STe. It's my way of saying where my faith lies in Atari hardware and Atari management.

Space Ace Data Base

I ordered Talon's IBM Supercharger hardware emulator at the recent Pittsburgh show sponsored by P.A.C.E., so I'll be able to do G-Work at home. In a solemn promise to Whatshername, who is not very "computer literate" by the way, I agreed to limit software purchases to those programs which were compatible with my work data files and other necessary, serious software. I considered telling her that the Supercharger was just a door prize at the show, but I didn't have that much cash on me. I was happy to report to her later that my only purchases were the *Falcon* word-processor (with *Mission Disk* spell checker), the *Red Storm Rising* spreadsheet program, and the popular *Space Ace* Data Base.

How Old Is Your Car?

Elsewhere at the show, Bob Brodie ingratiated himself with the local user groups by repeating his tired chestnut about how computers, like cars, should be traded in every few years. "How old's your car?" he asked no one in particular. As I'd arrived in my thirteen year old Chevy, I had to sympathize with W.A.C.O. 8-bit Librarian Paul Plants who stated that his old car and 8-bit computer both ran fine, but his car was still supported by the manufacturer. Ralph Mariano of ST Report, which everyone knows is not affiliated with Atari (giggle), ran blocker for Brodie throughout the session. Keith Krause, President of W.A.C.O. earned the Best Comeback of the Show Award, when Mariano scourged the assembly by saying that the user groups weren't doing enough to encourage the next generation of Atari users. "There are no kids here at the show," he challenged, "Where are the kids?" "They're at home playing with their Nintendos," was Krause's retort. Remember when the ST first came out, everyone wondered what the ST stood for. Various suggestions were SixTeen bit, Sam Tramiel, even Super Terrific. It's been suggested that, comparing potential to the efforts in marketing, the ST could stand for Simply Tragic.

The Decade of Atari

In the April 16 issue of the USA Today newspaper, the Atari Portfolio was highly rated in an article on portable computers. The next day the Atari stock fell. Go figure. Also in the papers recently, Atari founder Nolan Bushnell has taken a job at Commodore. Wasn't he announced as being hired back at Atari to work in the games division a year or so ago? If so, I hope he didn't take too much with him. In Atari's reports to the stockholders, Sam Tramiel confirmed my prediction of his quote to the effect that the 90's would be the decade of the Atari. That prediction was made in my last article, in the issue of *Current Notes* which carried a similar message on the cover.

That computer hacker who got into a number of mainframes, including the N.A.S.A. computer, was convicted in Federal Court of intentionally writing and spreading his virus program, resulting in untold damages. This was despite a defense which supposedly claimed it was all just an accident which happened while he was short on sleep. Right! Wide awake, I can't put a delay loop in a basic program without getting an error message. And how about that guy who sued the major broadcasting company because he owned a hundred shares of stock and felt he could prove the company was mismanaged? They settled out of court for millions! Now if I could only find a company that would fit that bill.

Atari IQ Quiz

ST Informer recently carried an Atari IQ quiz. It was all right as far as it went, but I would have added some additional questions, like the following, which could REALLY test the knowledge of a true Atarian.

1. In what way is the number 60 significant to Atari?

A) The number of dealers in the Toronto area.
B) The number of U.S. dealers.
C) The percentage of workers on the job in Sunnyvale.

2. Atari's marketing strategy is primarily concentrated...

A) in Europe.
B) in Canada.
C) in sanity.

3. Which represents the smallest unit of time?

A) A nanosecond.
B) The G-Man's appearance on TV.
C) The battery life of an Atari laptop.

4. What goal is the most difficult to attain?

A) Getting the Babel Fish.
B) Recording an Atari commercial on your VCR.
C) Collecting an executive pension in Sunnyvale.

5. Atari stock inspired what famous old saying?

A) You get what you pay for.
B) What goes up, must come down.
C) You can't lose money on stock...unless you sell it.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Yes, those notes and more were found in the coat pocket that morning. When I stopped outside the destination, the Wheeling Police indoor firing range, my partner and I got out of the G-Car together for the last time. I walked over to the river bank and watched the Ohio slowly eddy by. I hoped my conversion from 8-bit to ST wouldn't be as difficult and potentially traumatic as this switch was about to be. At least I knew I could count on my local user groups to get me through that switch. And I'd still have the trusty 8-bit, because I don't trade in products as long as they work well. I reached under my coat and pulled out the Smith & Wesson .357 revolver and dumped the six rounds into my open palm. I carried it, empty cylinder open, into the firing range. I placed it on the table in front of our range instructor, who'd arrived earlier from Pittsburgh. The badge stamped into the side of the gun was facing up, like a giant proof mark.

The instructor passed me a box containing the replacement. It was a black, 9 MM pistol with those new, glow in the dark sights. "It's small, but carries nearly three times the ammo without reloading. You get three magazines and a box of ammo to go, after you qualify." He removed the grip adapter, something I wouldn'tneed with the new one's double stack magazine and wide grip. "Read me off the serial numbers while I make a note." I recited the number on the old gun without having to look. "With that number, it must have been out of the first batch of 66's they bought fifteen years ago. You won't miss it much, the replacement's better in every way." He sounded like someone comparing his ST to my old 8-bit, talking as if it was only a piece of plastic. I watched him look down the barrel, double check the empty cylinder and place the revolver into a box. "No, I won't miss it," I lied sarcastically, "After all, it's only a piece of iron."

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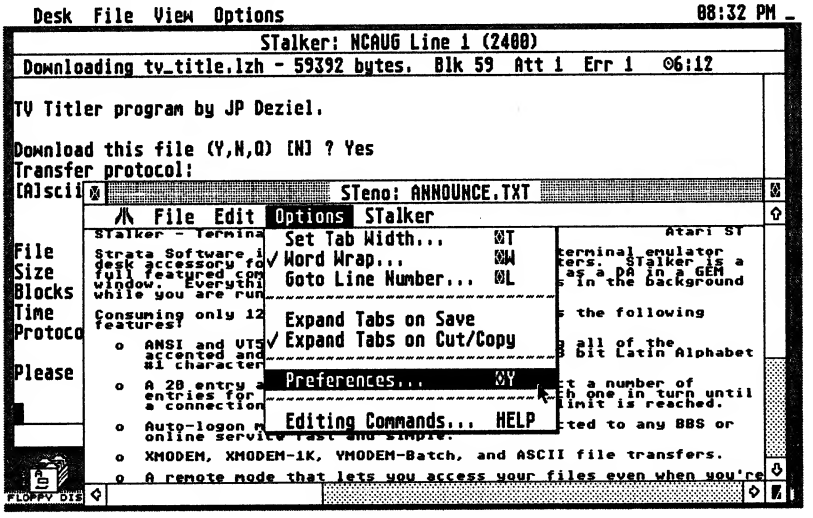

***STeno* features:** command entry via ALT-keys or the unique menu bar *inside the accessory window* ♦ configurable word-wrap ♦ search and replace ♦ *background* printing ♦ variable tabs ♦ choice of font sizes ♦ Mac-like cut/copy/paste and text block selection using the mouse ♦ hot-key to/from *STalker* ♦ fast paragraph reformatting ♦ can be used as a type-ahead buffer for *STalker*

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Fleet Street Publisher 3.0

If at First You Don't Succeed...

By Christopher Anderson

A Vast Improvement

Just when you thought it was safe to get into desktop publishing again, along comes another DTP program with loads of promise, great features...and the kind of simple execution gaffes that just make you want to cry.

PageStream, in its early incarnations, was one such program. Buggy, slow, and full of baffling design inconsistencies, the program deserved the flack it caught when it was first released early last year. But Soft-Logik worked hard, sent out lots of updates, and eventually rescued *PageStream* and their own reputation.

Now comes *Fleet Street Publisher 3.0, (FSP)* the third version of another oft-maligned DTP program. The new update represents a vast improvement over its curiously crippled predecessors--in output alone, it's now at least as good as the best publishing programs available for the ST--but like the early *PageStream*, it's still sluggish and plagued with frustrating design quirks. FSP has had three chances to get it right but, while getting closer, it's not quite there yet.

MichTron, which is importing the British-produced program for Mirrorsoft, says that the version provided to *Current Notes* is still in the late beta stages, so one can expect that some of the minor glitches encountered will be eradicated soon. But it's going to take more than a debugging to bring this program into serious competition with *Calamus* (in shear number of features and sturdy construction), *PageStream* (in flexibility and power), or even *Publisher ST* (in ease of use).

Where It Stands Out

Nevertheless, *FSP* stands out in several areas, the most notable being its terrific output. In version 3.0, *FSP* has integrated UltraScript's Postscript-compatible technology into the program itself. The result is some of the best-looking pages to have ever come out of a 300 dpi printer (or even a dot matrix). *FSP* uses scaleable outline fonts, which means that it produces near-perfect characters in any point size from 4 to 999 points. The included fonts are well-designed and eminently professional--not too heavy (a common *PageStream* complaint) and not too light (like some of *Publisher ST's* fonts). In addition to a symbol font, three font families are supplied, each one subdivided into regular, italic, bold, and bold italic faces. Of course, *FSP* also produces Postscript files, so you can take the pages to a commercial printer for ultra high-resolution printing.

Still, great printing isn't worth much if the program is so frustrating to use that you quit before finishing a page. *FSP's* design flaws probably aren't bad enough to make you throw up your hands in disgust, but they are time-consuming, unnecessary and counter-productive. And that's a shame, because *FSP* is a fundamentally solid and useful program behind a flawed interface.

Professional Quality

In general appearance, *FSP* is of relatively conventional design. There are the customary text and graphics mode icons on the left of the screen, as well as clipboard and trashcan icons. Up to seven windows and documents can be opened simultaneously. Although *FSP* may not be as powerful as *Calamus, PageStream*, or the top publishing programs in the Macintosh and IBM worlds, its features place it well within the professional-quality ranks.

Notable highlights include the use of master pages, macros, text

flow around graphics and invisible user-drawn boundaries, search and replace of text attributes, text export, text copy with or without attributes, hyphenation, picture rotation (no text rotation, however), and an extensive customizing ability.

A Crime of Omission

One glaring *FSP* omission, however, is text "tags," at least in the classic sense. The ability to format paragraphs and other text blocks with tags of a predefined style has proven invaluable in desktop publishing. What *FSP* offers instead is function-key macros. Twenty function keys can be assigned a full set of style, font, and layout attributes. Striking the appropriate function key at a certain point in the document causes all subsequent text to take on the new format. Instead of tagging a particular paragraph in a certain style, an *FSP* user would insert a new function-key macro at the beginning of the paragraph, then insert another macro at the end of the paragraph to return the rest of the text to the original style.

In some cases, the function key method is actually faster than a tag. A series of paragraphs need only be marked once at the beginning and again at the end, as opposed to tagging each paragraph. But standard tags have names and their definitions can be easily changed, thereby changing all the text in the document marked with that tag. Although *FSP* can search and replace one function key macro with another, it's extremely difficult to keep track of what's what (the macros are invisibly imbedded within the document and can't be named), and the feature won't work across page boundaries.

Performance

(in minutes, using a DeskJet printer)

	FSP 3.0	PageStream	Pub ST
Redraw	0:12	0:08	0:06
Print:	11:42	12:28	9:50
File Size (Bytes)	25,368	40,893	28.609

Other Idiosyncracies

If that were its only idiosyncracy, *FSP* would still be a strong competitor to the other top ST publishing packages. Unfortunately, the program's problems run deeper. First of all, *FSP* is slow. Even on a 2.5 meg ST with a fast hard drive, a Turbo 16 CPU upgrade, and all the speed-up software in the book, *FSP's* response might best be called leisurely (see benchmark comparisons). Some of that redraw time is no doubt spent recalculating the scaleable fonts, but more of it is likely to be simple sloth. *PageStream*, which is no speed demon, manages to display outline fonts in much more reasonable time, as does *Calamus*.

FSP's glacial response time makes entering text an especially thankless task. Part of the text-entry problems is that it's difficult not to out-type the program, but blame should also be directed at the designers' curious idea of how a cursor should work. The *FSP* cursor is a gray box the width and height of an "m" in the current point size. At first thought, that sounds like a good idea; cursors should indeed reflect the environment in which they exist. But a simple vertical bar would have sufficed. Because the "m" is the widest of all letters, the *FSP* cursor almost always overlaps several characters. Placed on the word "ill" (or any other series of skinny letters) the cursor slops over the entire sequence. A look at the manual will tell you that the actual insertion point is on the left edge of this huge gray blob, but why make it necessary to look something like that up?

There's more, unfortunately. Although a gray cursor may sound as good as a black one, it isn't. Black cursors are drawn with what is known as XOR logic--what was black before is made white, and visa-versa. The underlying character is just as readable as it was before, it's just shown in reversed colors. But a gray cursor is written right over the underlying text, which means small characters like dashes, periods and commas are made practically invisible. It's a little thing, but it turns typing and editing in *FSP* from a mere annoyance to near torture.

Perhaps *FSP's* flaws would be less glaring if the program didn't show so much promise in other aspects. Output is exemplary, as previously mentioned, but some other features approach the big boys as well. Text and graphics can be imported in a variety of formats including the most common word-processor formats and both line and paint art formats. For the first time, *FSP* now allows text flow across pages (although it's still something of a kludge, as will be explained later). And some sophisticated drawing tools, such as arc and pie-slice drawing, are included.

Otherwise, the program operates more or less like others of its ilk. You draw frames, import text (forget typing it in, you can turn gray just editing it), move things around until they look right and fit, and print. A separate window is available in which to edit text, but it's just as slow and cumbersome as the main work window and is best ignored.

One's first experience with FSP is a little disorienting. The installation program bears little resemblance to the description in the manual. Although the program is intended to set *FSP* up for the user's printer, most of the printer drivers described in the manual aren't

included. However, a file called MASTER.DEF is. That file apparently replaces all the missing printer drivers, and the particular printer to use is now chosen at print time.

A World Full of "Overlays"

For reasons that only a careful examination of the manual will reveal, the first entry in the File menu is called "Overlay." (It turns out to be a list of separate "modules" that come with *FSP* but are not part of the basic program.) When selected, Overlay turns into a scrollable display of choices, ranging from a command to vertically justify text to selections that import special text and graphic formats.

More overlay modules can, theoretically, be added in the future, and would then appear somewhere in the list. As commendable as expendability is, it seems counterproductive to lump all the modules together within the same menu item just to make life easier for the programmer. Many of the overlays are completely unrelated, and all are inconvenient to get to, often involving clicking a main menu item, scrolling a list, and then clicking a submenu item just to get something as common as hyphenation and text export.

FSP has a menu item for on-line help, but it simply calls up a file selector that lists several documents (with cryptic filenames like "quads" and "tabulate") in the HELP folder. On selection, these files reveal themselves to be just regular desktop-publishing pages, and take just as long to display as any other complex document. It's faster to open the manual.

To Each Its Own

One feature that has remained throughout *FSP's* evolution is the imposition of "correct" disk management on the user. *FSP* requires that each document have its own folder (In fact, it won't allow you to start a new document until you create a new folder. Select an existing one by mistake and it will curtly abort the command with no explanation). Each page is actually a different file, which is automatically created by FSP when you add a page to your document.

Those who remember the previous versions of *FSP* will note that this "feature" is a throwback to the days when the program not only saved each page as a different file, but actually treated each as a different document, with no text flow permitted between them. Although that particular gaffe is now gone, *FSP* still does not automatically reflow text between pages when text is added or deleted. The user is required to select the very British sounding "tidy text" command after editing to reformat the document.

Most of FSP's problems center around its clumsy GEM interface. In general, the program requires an extraordinary amount of typing and mouse-clicking for what should be simple tasks. In cases where several menu sub-choices are available (such as the type of text justification), *FSP* typical response is to offer a single entry with an arrow next to it. Click on the arrow and a new alternative will replace the first option. Click long enough and the original choice will reappear. Only in cases where there are literally dozens of possibilities will *FSP* allow the user to pick from a menu.

Rather than the usual "cut," "copy" and "paste," *FSP* uses a process of shift-click, click-shift-click and other permutations--some involving the clipboard icon and some not--to operate on blocks of text. Several of the editing innovations are good ones; dragging a block to another place should indeed mean "move the block," as *FSP* interprets it. But other procedures (like the shift-click copy operation) are just non-standard enough to erode a new user's confidence.

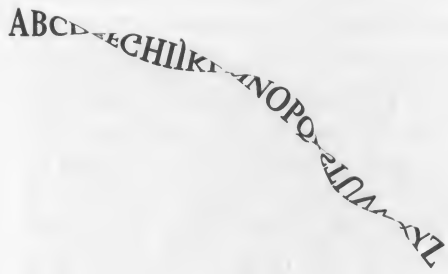
Reliability was not a serious problem with the version of *FSP* reviewed. It crashed occasionally, especially when one particularly complex graphic was imported, and went completely awry when printing a document with a large IMG file. Memory management was a problem with complex pages; even with nearly two megabytes of free memory, *FSP* sometimes complained. (Michtron says they are aware of the memory problem and it is being corrected.) And finally, after some perplexing crashes, it was discovered that *FSP* is incompatible with *STeno*, the desk accessory notepad.

On the plus side, the spiral-bound documentation for *FSP* is very complete and accurate, especially in comparison with some of the sorry manuals MichTron has previously produced. At 442 pages, the manual is about the right length and the writing throughout is commendably clear.

Spell checking is surprisingly useful as well. Although the spell checker is disk-based, it runs at a good clip (much faster than *PageStream's* spell checker, which must hold a speedless record of some sort), and with 120,000 words already in its files, the *FSP* dictionary almost never needs to be taught a new one.

FSP has a lot going for it. It puts out great-looking pages and offers most of the features a normal user would want. But until Mirrorsoft tames *FSP's* ragged interface and speeds it up, the program is unlikely to win many converts in a market already dominated by cheaper and more mature packages like *Calamus* and *PageStream*.

The Calamus Desktop



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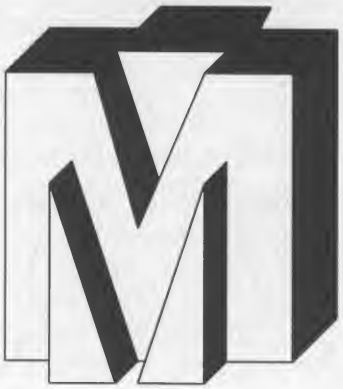

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STARTING BLOCK

by Richard Gunter

Cataloging Floppy Disks

The floppy disk collection keeps growing, yes, it does. And since a double–sided ST floppy disk can hold 700 kilobytes or more, things can get hard to keep track of, can't they?

That's where the floppy organizers (sometimes called indexers or catalogers) come in. These programs allow you to accumulate a list of files in one place, keyed to a disk identifier so that you can find that mumblety–mumbled file that you know darned well you have––somewhere.

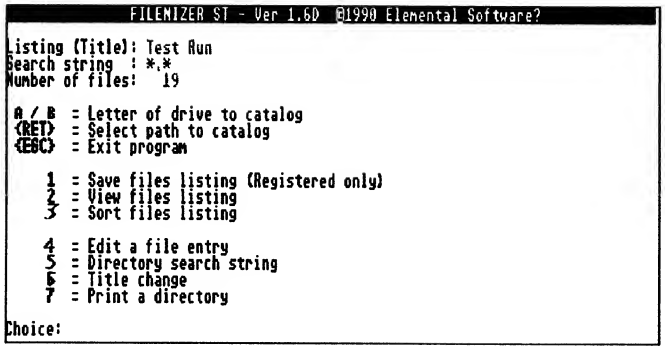
A job for a database program, you say? Sure, but these specialized programs have one compelling advantage: they build their file lists by reading the directory of each floppy disk. A bit tricky to do that with a general–purpose database program.

I've seen three floppy disk indexers: two freeware and one shareware. Let's take a closer look at them.

Filenizer ST

This is a shareware program, from Elemental Software?. A slightly crippled version of this program is available on BBS systems and on CompuServe.

Releasing as freeware a crippled version of a shareware program is a fairly common technique these days; you get enough of the program to find out whether you really want it. The whole thing, plus documentation and support is yours if you pay the shareware fee. *Filenizer's* shareware fee is $15.



Filenizer (main screen shown above) isn't a GEM application. The keyboard is used to select options. Missing from the freely distributed copy is the ability to load and save file lists. I don't have the full–featured version. I found another program that I like better. It's worth a look though; maybe it's for you.

To build a list of the files on your floppy disks, you first provide a name for the list. This is just a text title. Next, insert a floppy disk into drive A: or B: and hit the appropriate key. *Filenizer* reads the directory, then prompts you for a description of each file.

I noticed a minor bug in the free distribution––if the floppy had no files in the root directory, the whole disk was skipped. I'd imagine that's fixed by now.

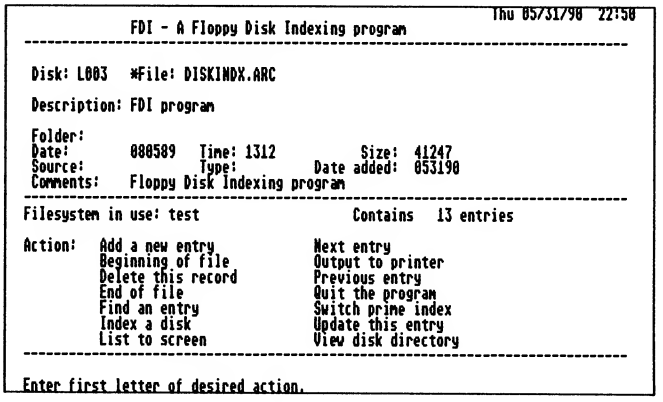
The file list is pretty basic, but adequate: filespec (name and extension), size of the file, disk identifier (8 characters), and the text description that you typed in when the disk was indexed.

Strengths of *Filenizer* lie in two areas. First, it lets you make multiple lists of files, and will sort the entire list by filespec. This makes it easy to locate files stored in multiple places. Second, it will make a list of the files on a hard drive partition as well as your floppy collection. Neither of the others will do that.

One of the program's weaknesses is that it isn't too bright. There seems to be no way to avoid double–listing the same floppy disk through user carelessness. It asks for a disk identifier for each disk, but it's entirely up to you to keep them straight. If you mess up, you must delete the duplicated file entries individually. *Filenizer's* other weakness is that its search capability is limited, although the author states the shareware version has more in this area.

FDI

This freeware program, by Rod Waehner, has been around awhile (CN #323). Like *Filenizer*, it isn't a GEM application, using keyboard controls exclusively. (The main screen is shown below). It is smarter than *Filenizer* in that it remembers the floppy disks it indexes by writing a small file on each disk. This file



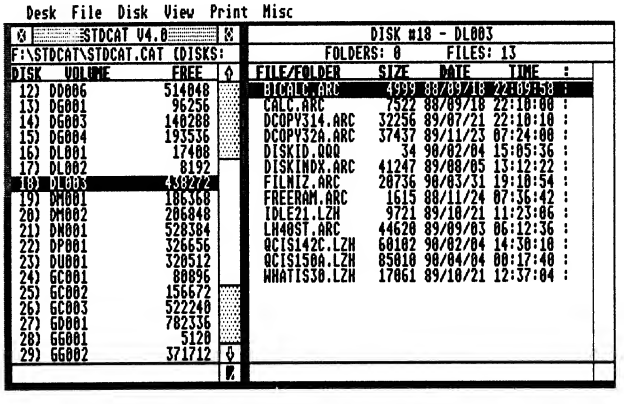
(DISKID.QQQ) contains the user-supplied disk identifier and a title. Later, if you've added files to the floppy, *FDI* simply updates its list. This process includes deleting entries for files that are no longer on the floppy.

FDI reads date/time, size, folder, filespec, and the disk identifier from the floppy disk. It supplies the date the file was added to the list. The rest of the information is supplied by the user. Two sorts are supported: one by disk identifier, the other by filespec. Searching is limited to these parameters.

I used *FDI* for several months, and had only a couple of problems with it. Since it seems to predate the Mega STs and their version of TOS, it runs a little flaky on my machine, hanging up once in a while. Its print function seems geared to the Epson dot matrix printers and doesn't work at all on the SLM804.

STDCAT 4.0

STDCAT 4.0 is the glitziest of the lot, and the one I'm currently using. This is a freeware GEM application, written by Bob Silliker, and is available in the *Current Notes* library (introduced this month on CN #475.)

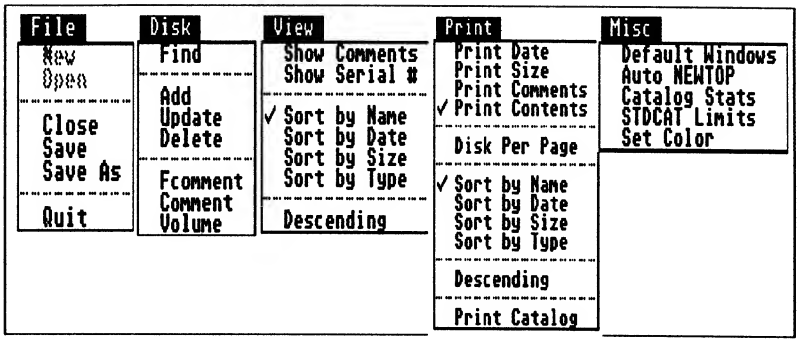


The program has some nice features (and a few omissions). The display has two windows: one for a list of disk identifiers and parameters, and the other for a list of the files on the disk (see illustration above).

Unlike the other programs, *STDCAT* modifies the floppies at a very low level. It alters the volume id, which is kept in a fixed area of the disk.

STDCAT also records the volume serial number in its index. This is a pseudo-random number supplied by disk formatting programs at the time the disk is formatted and "should" be unique.

The user can supply comments at disk, folder, and file levels. This gives you a lot of flexibility in documenting your disk library. Naturally, you must supply those descriptions, and all are optional.



Both windows can be sized and have slider bars. The left-hand window must be expanded to see the disk comments, and an option is provided to show the file comments in the right window (before the date/time information).

The right window is operated much like a desktop window. Folder names are displayed, and a double-click exposes a folder's contents. It's so much like the desktop that I sometimes forget and try to display the file itself...

The second figure shows the contents of the drop-down menus. The most interesting option is the "Auto Newtop" option. If enabled, moving the mouse to any spot on one of the windows makes that window the active one and pops it to the top. Nice if you want to expand one of the windows and browse.

Search options are extensive. An elaborate wild-card convention is supported, and you can search on any comment field or on volume, folder, or filespec.

Printing is vanilla, using standard control sequences that work with the Diablo Emulator and should work with most any printer. It produces a nice print layout, and you have some choices in what information you print. It will even print a table of contents for the printed material. You can't, however, set a search criterion and print only those entries that satisfy it, nor can you redirect output to a file.

I'd like to see a way to save user preferences (a configuration file). *STDCAT* also assumes the catalog data is on the root directory of the partition it's running from. There is an environment variable, but it's not available from the desktop.These are mild nuisances, though. (*In addition, it does not appear to work with TOS 1.4. -JW*)

Recommendation: I like *STDCAT,* but you may want to look at the others.

With any floppy disk cataloger, you'll need to work out an indexing scheme for the disks. Something you can use on the label, and not too long, say about 8 characters. That'll let you file your floppies in order so that you can look up a file, then pull the correct disk right out of the box.

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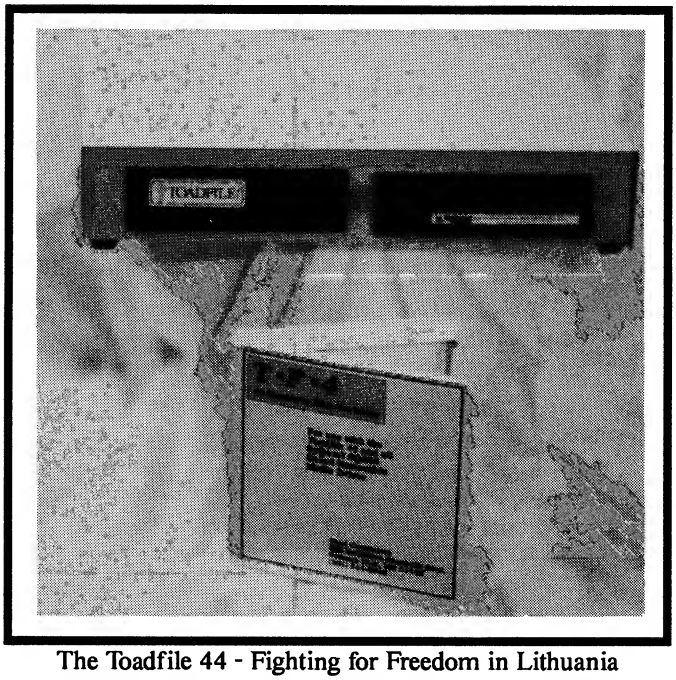

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Red Storm Rising

World War III at Your Finger Tips

Review By Don Elmore

If, when you buy MicroProse's *Red Storm Rising*, you are not a graduate of the US Naval Academy, and have not completed the Navy's Nuclear Power School, Submarine Officers Basic School, Prospective Nuclear Engineer Officer Course, Submarine Officers Advanced Course and two or three other post-graduate nuclear command related schools, then by the time you have advanced to a level where you dare to tackle the game's WWIII scenario, you will believe that you graduated "cum laude" from all of them! Experienced warfare simulation gamers have got to find *Red Storm Rising* awesome. Not-so-experienced gamers (such as this writer) will invariably find *Red Storm Rising* initially overwhelming, and after giving it a fair shot, will spend many pleasurable hours becoming an accomplished skipper of one of our most powerful and impressive military weapons, the American SSN, a nuclear-powered fast attack submarine.

Awesome Detail

The detail offered in this simulation is amazing, and after trying to bring everything together in this article, I find that an appropriate review would be too long for one edition of *Current Notes*, so I will properly divide this into two parts, with a complete description of the game now, followed in the next issue with the details and excitement of the advanced WWIII ultimate level of play. This is most definitely one of those "where do we start" reviews; the best place to begin is describing the contents of the box--two 3 1/2" disks; a keyboard overlay; a map of the Norwegian Sea Theater; a registration card; an order card for backup disks; a generic manual and a technical supplement sheet for the Atari ST. The simulation plays on either the 520 or 1040 ST, as well as both the Megas. It takes a color monitor (or a color TV hookup) and can be run from the keyboard, or by using the mouse or joystick. I prefer the mouse. MicroProse,

regretting the "continuing casual and organized software piracy," employs a copy-protection scheme that provides maximum flexibility in installing the game on floppy disks or a hard drive. The scheme uses a "key-disk" technique. You can copy the game files from the original disks to other floppies or to a hard disk and when loading the game you are prompted to insert the original disk in drive A, to complete the boot process.

Complex but Comprehensive

Now, here's where things get complicated. There are almost unlimited options. The manual is one of the finest that I have had the good fortune to use. It is extremely well written, in clear and concise terms, and when it says that hitting a certain key (or combination of keys) will produce a particular action, it does! The manual strongly recommends that you try a learning game before attempting the full *Red Storm Rising* campaign, and unless you have served aboard an SSN or SSBN (boomer), you would be well advised to start off with one of the introductory scenarios.

But, in case you want a variety of options available, read on! You have four different time periods to choose from. 1984 is the earliest, when Russian sea forces lack "borrowed" western technology and when you have only the original Mark 48 torpedoes and Harpoon missiles in your arsenal. Next comes 1988, when Russian SIERRA or KILO class submarines chase you and you have the newer Mark 48 ADCAP torpedoes and Tomahawk missiles to use. Then comes 1992, when the Russian fleet includes nuclear aircraft carriers and you now have Sea Lance ASW missiles and Stinger SAM masts on your sail. The final time frame is 1996 when, although Soviet maritime warfare improvements continue expanding, your new Seawolf-class boats are launched, complete with the latest concept in torpedoes, the silent launching ("Swim Out") Mark 48's. More on those later.

After choosing the time period, you then select which type of nuclear fast attack submarine you want to command. You have five choices ranging from a Permit-class boat through the Sturgeon-class, Los Angeles-class, Improved Los Angeles-class and finally, the Sea-wolf. Or, for added realism, you can let the NMPC (Naval Military Personnel Command) select your boat for you.

Difficulty of Challenge

The next choice is the level of challenge, which ranges from Introductory through Normal, Serious and ends with Ultimate. Introductory (where I also recommend you start) is an excellent level in which to experiment and practice...the Russians' weapons have no warheads and cannot damage your boat. MicroProse recommends the Normal challenge level for casual gaming and describes the Serious level as fully realistic (where the enemy commanders are smart and skillful in submarine warfare). In the ultimate level, you are seriously challenged. For example, in the lower levels your crew will advise you not only of a "contact," but will identify the type of enemy (or friendly) vessel and provide its range, bearing, speed and much more information. At the Ultimate level, your sonar crew will announce a possible contact, but you (as Commander) will be solely responsible for maneuvering your boat towards the contact in order to enhance the information "acquired" and, eventually, you will have to compare the ship's acoustic signature carefully to positively identify the target yourself!

Scenarios

There are three basic scenarios; Training, Battle and the *Red Storm Rising* Campaign. Training is excellent for practice. The many Battle scenarios prepare you for the "ultimate" challenge, the *Red Storm Rising* Campaign where you "do" WW III from initial invasions to either victory or defeat!

Let's start out by trying one of the easier scenarios. You can literally wade right in and pick a Battle, but if you are not very familiar with submarine warfare, I'd recommend against that! Being inexperienced, I not only chose a Training mission, I also read (and reread) the entire manual several times. Boy, did that confuse me! Anyway, I followed MicroProse's suggestions and chose to command an Improved Los Angeles-class attack submarine in the 1992 time frame, hunting a November-class Russian submarine at the Introductory level (open sea). Had I chosen a higher challenge level, I would have engaged the enemy in ice floes/drifts (Normal level), beneath the ice pack (Serious level) or in the most demanding, shallow waters (Ultimate level).

"Read My Lips!"

Now, here's where I urge you to "read my lips," as I provide the two most-valuable-ever hints to novice/aspiring submarine commanders. Number one is: remember the ALT-P keystroke combination. This pauses the game to give you time to consult the manual to see if there is any way to remove yourself from whatever predicament you have manuevered yourself into! Hopefully, intact! The second most important hint is to: make full and regular use of the "Help" key.

The simulation, through your "crew," will provide invaluable suggestions and advice. For example, in one of my earlier attempts to stalk and sink a Kashin-class destroyer, when I was on final approach and about ready to unleash the awesome power of my Mark 48 torpedoes, or my Tomahawk missiles, my weapons officer very politely reminded me that all four of my tubes were empty and if I was at all serious about doing any real damage to the destroyer, I might wish to consider loading some torpedoes and missiles!

ER's

There is another interesting aspect of the simulation. At the end of each mission, you are offered the opportunity to replay the mission. If you decline the offer, a mission report is automatically "uploaded" to COMSUBLANT and you are given an Efficiency Rating (ER). The ER is based on a careful review (by the simulation) of your performance, and takes into consideration the quality of opposition engaged, the type of boat you chose to command, weapons available (and their use) and the level of challenge. When you reach the Campaign challenge, you can qualify for medals and decorations, ranging from the Navy Commendation all the way up to the Congressional Medal of Honor. You usually win the rank of Commander and remain there. The Navy doesn't promote sub captains after each battle, preferring to keep experienced captains where they are.

I was somewhat bemused at my early ERs, because they did not appear to be consistent at all. For example, on an Introductory mission, when I set out to find (and kill) a Kashin-class destroyer, shortly after departing Holy Loch, my sonar officer announced "acquiring" the Udaloy (providing her course, range and distance). I quickly turned to place myself off her bow and she "foolishly" sailed right by me, fired a Tomahawk (yes, by then I knew to load all tubes upon departure from Holy Lock). The missile went airborn and dropped right down her main stack, sinking her, without her ever realizing I was in the area...much less firing anything at me. The whole mission took less than five minutes! COMSUBLANT awarded me an ER of 60%.

In a later Introductory simulation, where I was seeking a November-class submarine, the enemy found me before I was ready to fire any torpedoes at her. She closed quickly, and I found myself in the embarrassing position of being too close to effectively fire any of my torpedoes or missiles. However, she continued maneuvering and was able to fire a total of nine torpedoes at me! Each one hit me midships and I carried nine dents around for the rest of the mission (remember, in the Introductory level, enemy weapons have

no warheads). I was finally able to drop a noisemaker and a decoy, while effecting a 15 degree left turn with a simultaneous crash dive. That got enough distance between us for me to fire one of my Mark 48s and sink her. I was awarded an ER of 96% for that mission! I'm still trying to figure that one out.

Details

But, back to our scenario. Once into the hunt, the primary navigation display (figure 1) is always the first screen of your tactical display. The information displayed in the example tells you that your boat is moving right along at 12 knots on a heading of 236 degrees (somewhere about West-South-West for you land-lubbers) at a depth of 375 feet. You are in a gentle (if that is an acceptable submariner term!) left turn and you are level on the keel, neither ascending nor diving. Oh, the little arrow underneath the dash mark tells you that you are cruising beneath the thermal layer. More on that later.

Suddenly, your sonar shop announces an acquired target (figure 2), and here is where this simulation really begins to cook. That secondary display provides a wealth of information, all of it served up nicely by your crew (remember at the higher levels you must sneak up and figure out much of this data). Your contact is identified as the Kashin-class destroyer UDALOY. The color of the word CONTACT is important, it changes with the strength of the acquisition. At higher levels, the "contact" can vary from totally unknown to identification as a general type (sub or ship) to a specific type/class. Using your acoustic signature display, you can identify the target by name, but that comes later.

```
HEADING
236 DEG
SPEED
12 KNTS
DEPTH -
375 FT.
RUDDER
LEFT 5
PLANES
LEVEL
```

Figure 1

So, we know that the UDALOY is moving along at a brisk 25 knots, on a course of 001 degrees (about as Northerly as you can get), on a bearing of 167 degrees (to your Southeast). The SENSOR information is vital. That particular reading tells you that you are receiving target data from your passive sonar array with a signal strength of 27. I haven't figured out how high the strength numbers go, but the manual states that you do not acquire a target until a signal strength of at least 8 is received. The -IIA represents the best signal your enemy would get from you, in this case a minus 11 from her active sonar. Until her signal strength reaches 8, she can't "see" you. The SOL (solution) notation refers to the accuracy of your data; "by the book" commanders prefer to fire only after achieving an SOL of 90% or better. The last notation, the RANGE is also crucial, and will help you in deciding what (and when) to use against her. Oh, the arrow and dash mark represents the target's position in relation to the thermal layer. Since she is a surface ship, it is comforting to know that your sensors have placed her above the thermal layer! But, more on those interesting details later.

```
CONTACT
UDALOY
BEARING
167 DEG
SENSOR
27P -11A
SOL 87%
CRS /SPD
001 25
RANGE
34 KYDS
```

Figure 2

All you have to do is decide how you want to approach the UDALOY and whether you want to use torpedoes, or Tomahawks. You either move right up her baffles (wake, for us novices) or lay off and attack from her side. Fire your weapon and watch her sink....if you have programmed the torpedo or missile correctly, if you have identified the PAP accurately, and if she hasn't acquired you first and taken some unpleasant countermeasures. You can watch a nice graphic display of your weapons firing and hitting the enemy, and even watch her sink. For some reason, your sinking shot invariably drops the enemy flat and midships; she never sinks by the bow or stern. But, if you are a stickler for realism, you can turn off the displays, and get confirmation of a hit and the destruction of the target by sensors, as you would on a real submarine.

In the next article, I shall spend a great deal more time describing the unbelievable details provided in order to stalk and kill the enemy and win WWIII. Until then, if there is any doubt thus far, my wholehearted recommendation is buy this game!!

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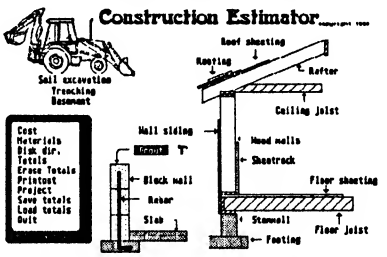

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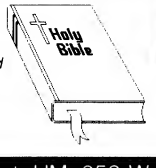

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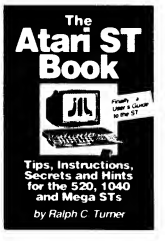

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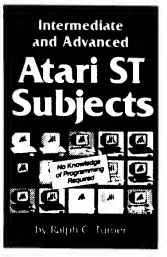

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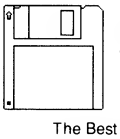

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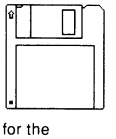

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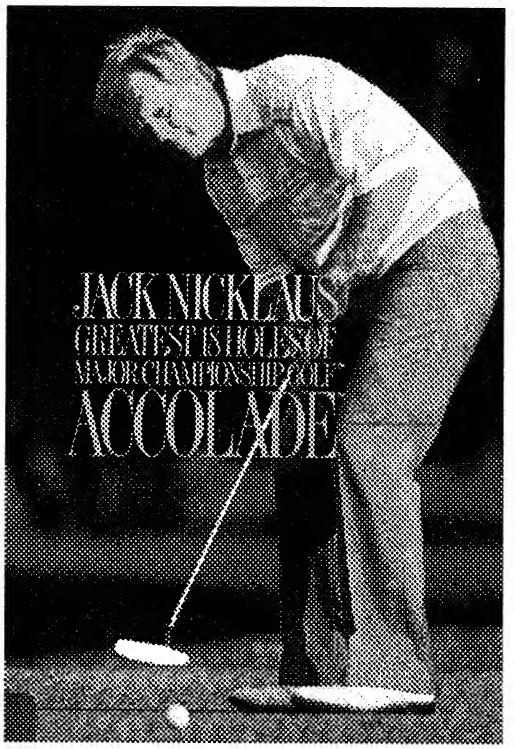
Nicklaus' Greatest 18 Holes

Accolade Outdoes Itself

Reviewed by Frank Sommers

At the Dawn of Time

On a rainy Sunday in March three years ago, six electronic golf wizards spent the afternoon and part of the evening paralyzed by the intensity of their concentration. After all, golf is four parts coordination and six parts concentration and these gentlemen were determined to best the other team. They were playing *Mean 18*, at the time the best golf simulation out for the ST, on a custom designed course called, "Agony 18." They were playing low total for the championship between Accolade's three golf addicts and three of *Current Notes'* authors. Finally, on Monday morning, since the last CN player had not turned in his score until long after dark, the results were published on both coasts. *Current Notes* had won by seven strokes. After all, they had designed the course.



We can only speculate about what caused Accolade to go out and find someone to design a course harder than "Agony 18." But they found him, and the Golden Bear has done it. He has taken holes from the hardest courses ever to have grass on them and put together *The Greatest 18 Holes of Major Championship Golf (Greatest 18)*. Is it any good? Add the graphics to the play action to the degree of the challenge to the authenticity of the game and the total is a resounding, "Yes!"

Those of you familiar with the original *Mean 18* will remember the French impressionist graphics and the little guy in knickers swatting away at a ball that would arc down the tree-studded fairways, if you were lucky. Well, the graphics for each of the holes is not as appealing as *Mean 18*. Except for the title and various menu screens, which are ad-copy sharp, the playing holes suggest that the major effort went into the design of the game and its play, which can be become very involving, if you are "a player."

The Play Action

To the left of view of the course is a "Power Bar" screen. A tall column of green, red and gray, graduated into ten parts of varying size. This is the cauldron that boils your golfing soul with regular delight. Something had to take the place of muscular coordination, a coordination so precise that you can hit a ball 300 yards, slicing it into a stiff cross wind and aimed to land short of the water hazard. And the Power Bar is it; it simulates all of that and a bit more. But, after considerable practice, you might ask, is there seriously any challenge left? Try it. You click once and the column of colored mercury rises rapidly toward the top. You click again and it stops, say at the 100 % line, which would give you a 250-yard drive. But, alas, you must click yet a third time and the column shoots downward. And if you click early, you'll have a hook that'll tear your ear off; or click too late and the slice will disappear off the screen and out of bounds. But early? You mean a quarter or an eighth of an inch above or below the 0% line? No, we mean a 64th of an inch, and you'll have a hook or a slice that could give you problems, if you hadn't planned on it. So legs, and arms and the rest of your body coordination have been replaced by eye-finger coordination, which can be very demanding and also very unforgiving.

Concentration

To "master" the Power Bar, you'll find it makes consummate good sense to go off to the practice fairway to try out your drives and long and short irons. You soon realize that by going beyond the 100% line on the Power Bar you can actually hit a 1 wood over 300 yards, just as far Nicklaus can. And with it will come the knowledge that hitting a precisely controlled 10-yard approach shot to the pin may be even harder; after all, you only have about 3/4 of an inch on the Power Bar to play with on a 10-yard pitch, which is barely time to get in three lighttning-quick clicks.

Then dutifully you go off to the practice putting green. Dutifully, because the first time you didn't, and

just started playing, and in three holes you were suddenly 17 over par, having missed several one–foot putts. Miss a one–foot putt! What were you doing! Looking at the dollies? No, actually you hadn't learned to read the break in the green correctly or gotten a strangle hold on the aiming indicator, considerably more precise for putting than for wood or iron shots. But even Nicklaus has missed 7–foot putts. You've seen him. (More on that in a moment.) So, practice you do, keeping your eye on the Break gauge below the Power Bar. On the course it tells you the direction and strength of the wind, and on the green the angle and slope of the green, which makes the putting end of the game deliciously challenging.

And what's this about concentration. Well, in the beginning you have a choice of playing either as a "beginner," an "expert," or a "pro." As a beginner, after each shot the correct club is selected for you for your next shot, when your turn comes, and the menu tells you how far the hole is and what the fullest reach of your club is, say 173 yards for a 5–iron, with no wind in your face. O.K., but when you progress, you get no prompt. No matter how long you've played this game, if you let down, if you stop concentrating, you're bound to hear a curse escape your lips, as your approach shot rockets a couple of hundred yards over the green, because you forgot to put your driver away and get out your 9–iron. The concentration is even more of a challenge when hitting irons or woods. You have steeled yourself to make the second click on the Power Bar just as the column reaches 70% to land short of the trap, but it goes above it, and you flinch and forget that you also need badly to hook the shot, but in your exasperation you snap off a straight one, straight into the trees.

Difficulty

If *Mean 18* was "something" of a challenge, which any good golf simulation must be to keep you playing it, then *Greatest 18* is a total challenge. The putting is more difficult. You can still sink the long ones, but now you can miss the shortest ones. And trouble. Once you're in trouble here, unless you've had hours of practice, you're likely to go from bad to worse. Hit a tree and you might waste four shots trying to get back for a clear shot at the green. Until trying *Greatest 18,* it had been some time since we'd had a 15 on a hole, real or electronic. On *Mean 18* sub–par golf was often not occasionally. On *Greatest 18* we finished 22 over par––on the first nine.

Touches

There are pleasing little additions to *Greatest 18.* After sinking a long putt, a message appears, "Excel–lent Putt," or after a rather bad hole, once you're in the cup, the message can read, "Finally!" At the beginning of each of the holes, which might be a favorite from Pebble Beach or a toughie from St. Andrews, Nicklaus will give you a few brief words about the hole, e.g. "A straight drive, but an undulating green awaits." At the end of each hole, a menu pops up telling you who had the longest drive on the hole, how many putts you've had, how many birdies and eagles, and who has approached closest to the green thus far.

The Worst Touch

The disks are unprotected so backup copies are no problem. But to protect their investment Accolade has put out a "code sheet" with 54 different course layouts on it. Before you can start your play you are asked to match the course displayed on the screen with the number affixed to that same course on your code sheet. Unfortunately, to keep the code sheet from being zeroxed. it comes on paper, which is a deep infra–red brownish mix that makes it visually awkward to compare and match courses, particularly when you have 54 choices to search through and compare. Result, Tee–Off Time regularly has to be put off for several minutes while you do your "hunt down."

The Best Touch

To make up for this, when you design your play at the beginning of the game, you can select as many as three computer opponents or live ones. The "robots," all nine of them, range from beginner to pro and include Curly O, first year out, and Jack N, the Golden Bear. Yes, you can actually get out there and go head–to–head with Nicklaus. You can watch him tee off on his favorite hole in the British Open and then try and follow his strength, timing, and strategy. It becomes a thinking man's game. You will find you improve rapidly, playing with that kind of competition, like playing with the pro at your club. Except, right now we're about to play 18 with Jack at St. Creek Golf Club in Nigoya, Japan, where we haven't played since 1947.

Jack Nicklaus' Greatest 18 Holes of Major Champion–ship Golf; $49.95; Accolade, 550 S. Winchester Blvd., Suite 200, San Jose, CA 95128; 408–985–1700. Addi–tional courses: $19.95, 1–800–245–7744

COMDEX, CD-ROMS, and Things that Begin with C

When faced with the option of writing this column or finishing a piggybacked two-to-four megabyte upgrade on my Mega 2, I chose the former; it is doubtful that my Mega 2 would be operational before this column was due. Atari, in their infinite swealth (a Daveism, meaning "property of being swell"), chose to omit the holes and traces for the additional 2 megabytes of memory from their current Mega 2 motherboards. This means that upgrading a Mega 2 to a Mega 4 is now much more difficult than it used to be. Before, you could just put the chips in the holes and be done with it. I could have used the Zubair Mega 2 RAM board, but it hardly seemed worth the money when I could get the same results with a little self torture.

COMDEX

I attended Spring 1990 COMDEX in Atlanta, and I learned a few things. COMDEX, for those of you who don't know, is probably the biggest convention/show in the computer industry. COMDEX stands for the COMputer Dealer EXpo. Might as well be SPANDEX, because all levels of computer types go, provided they're willing to pay the $75 entrance fee, from manufacturers to dealers to distributors to writers to just plain geeks. Anybody who wants to be on top of the computer world should not miss it.

Atari did not attend, as they were busy at the competing Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. I could just as easily have attended that show, but it, as its name implies, is much more geared to "consumer electronics." I was less interested in Super VHS than I was in computer industry stuff, hence my decision. Anyway, unless Atari had a TT, there wasn't anything of theirs that I hadn't already seen.

I acquired several little tidbits worth knowing about. The Atari SLM804 Laser Printer is identical to the Office Automation Systems Inc. Laserpro 5308. You might be able to find toner and drums for this printer more conveniently than for the Atari. Also, I found the Chinon CDS-430, identical to the Atari CDAR504 CD-ROM drive. The only difference between the Atari and the Chinon is the Atari interfacing and the plastic molds. (Atari's is the traditional grey, with ST-influenced buttons.) Read on for more information on the CD-ROM. But Atari clearly uses these two companies as OEMs.

Scuttlebutt that was floating around included news that Moniterm (the big-screen Mega ST monitor folks) is to be making the monitors for the TT, and news that SOFT PC, a company which already has software-based PC emulators for UNIX and Macintosh systems is to be making both a UNIX- and TOS-based version of their product for the TT. The SOFT PC is very nice, essentially an IBM PC operating out of a window, with the speed of an AT. Look for more on that as time goes on.

The rest of the stuff there only holds tangential relevance to the ST. I went around dreaming about interfacing this and that to the ST, putting things inside STacys and hanging things off of Portfolios. In fact, while I was in the CNN building I ran into Rick and Patricia from Gribnif Software (the NeoDesk people) and after doing the CNN studio tour, we wandered together, dreaming of all sorts of nifty ST things. They were the only other ST folks I saw there. And the only products made for the ST were joysticks and trackballs. And boy is Ted Turner a weird guy. He's got a movie theater that plays only Gone with the Wind.

CDAR504

As an Atari developer, I ordered and received a CDAR504 CD-ROM drive a couple of weeks ago. I just wanted to give some initial impressions of it, as it may be the most ethereal of Atari's vaporware products--over five years passed from announcement to release. I believe that's a record.

First off, as I said earlier, the drive is Chinon's CDS-430. Essentially, unless you hook it up to your ST, it works just like a non-programmable audio CD player. It has a front control panel, which can be removed for use as a remote control, and it has four buttons, one to play, two to skip and search forward and backward, and one to stop. It also has a red LED digital track readout. Very basic. Don't buy this instead of a nice Sony CD player, because the Sony would have many more features.

The excitement comes when you attach the CDAR504 to the ST. It transforms itself into a split-personality beast. First, you can use your ST to control its audio capabilities. There is a nice desk accessory called CD Audio which will allow you to program the order of tracks, as well as access your CD from any GEM program. The part I think is really nifty about the CD Audio accessory is that it will read a unique ID number off every CD, and thus can **know** what CD you've inserted. By looking up the ID number in a file that you or someone else created, it can tell you the

name of the CD, along with the names of all of the tracks. That's cool. When I first got the drive, I programmed in a bunch of my CDs, and then whenever I inserted a CD it would know everything about it. Very fun stuff. And I could access it from Calamus.

The more valid use of the drive comes from its actual ROM ability. First, I needed a CD-ROM to try, and a friend had some of the Computer Library series CDs. (They're compiled monthly by Ziff Davis as a ROM database of all sorts of stuff from many computer related publications.) Of course, these CDs were intended for IBMs, but they worked just fine on the ST and I had no trouble reading them. Of course, the PC programs would not run, but there was lots of text and I waded through it. The directory structure was just as on the ST (similar to the way PC and ST floppy and hard disks are interchangeable). On the average, these CDs contained 350 megabytes each.

The access time on the drive was not blindingly fast, but again, mass storage, not access time, is the strong side of CD-ROM technology. The drive felt like a very large and slow hard disk drive. The way the drive is accessed on the ST is via yet another somewhat goofy OS-enhancementy-kind-of-thing that Atari made called MetaDOS(tm). It essentially serves two functions: one is to provide a way to control the order of autobooting programs, and the other is to drive devices which need a funky device driver--in this case the CDAR504. What it does is installs the CDAR504 driver with its own little BIOS driver and unique MetaDOS ID, and then uses separate drivers for each file format, each with their own drive ID. So, you'd end up with three icons (one for the High Sierra driver, one for the ISO 9660 driver, and one for some unidentified IBM driver). As I don't know much about CD-ROM formats, I can't make any sweeping judgments about what will and won't work with the CDAR504. But in general, I think it will be a winner if they can get it out the door.

Of course, the same day that I figured out how to write programs to control the drive, its audio segment decided to quit. It no longer played any sound through its ports. In all other ways it behaved fine. In fact, if you weren't listening to it intently, flabbergasted that it had quit working, you wouldn't be able to tell that it wasn't playing your favorite tunes. I sent it back to Atari and they should have a new one. I don't hold this against them. Things just quit working sometimes.

Questions and Answers

STs, Fs, and Ms. One reader wants to know what the heck is going on with the ST model number designations F, FM and M. Basically, the F stands for Floppy. So any ST whose model number includes an F has a built in floppy drive. Examples are 520STF and 1040STF. The M stands for Modulator. So any ST whose model number includes an M includes an RF modulator, allowing connection to a TV or a composite monitor. A 520STFM of course has both. And Mega STs are completely illogical, because they just are called Megas. They have a floppy, no modulator, and no F or M.

DTP the Hard Way. The same reader ponders the effectiveness of a 1040ST with two double-sided drives and a Star NX-1000 printer for desktop publishing. Either *Calamus* or *Timeworks DTP* would be best for a system like that. *Timeworks* would require a fair amount of disk switching. *Calamus* would be great. If anyone has any comments about this, please forward them. I've got an open mind.

Complaining about Amigas. In response to my comments from last month about multitasking, I received a letter from Tony Belding of Hamilton, Texas. He makes some valid points about multitasking on the Amiga. I, because of limited experience with the Amiga, glossed over its multitasking abilities as "limited." They are not as limited as I portrayed them. He makes the point that you can actually do quite a lot with the Amiga's multitasking OS, most significant among them include running utilities like LHARC in the background while you're doing other things. This is valid. He also pointed out that the way the Amiga OS is set up, multitasking is automatic, and priority levels for certain programs may be set by the user. This is admittedly the ideal situation for multitasking. As Mr. Belding admits, programming for Multifinder on the Macintosh requires allowance for multitasking, which is my original point. Multitasking varies depending on how a programmer has laid out the system. But his comments are welcome and appreciated.

The End

Well, that's all for now. This article has taken me all day to compose, and has been interrupted by numerous phone calls, and now beer and an imminent game of *MULE* with friends, so I must bid you a fair adieux. I've got more stuff in store for September, so be on the lookout. Also, please send me questions. You know I love 'em.

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MAIL: David Troy, 556 Baltimore Annapolis Blvd.
Severna Park, MD 21146
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You'll get a coupon for a free CN library disk when you get your answers published. Those of you who are waiting for yours, they're on the way.

Manage your team to the World Series

The American PaSTime Baseball Simulator

Filled with statistics.

Review by Bill Moes

Many support programs.

America's pastime. Philosophers and poets have examined it as millions of Americans have played. There's something inextricably intertwined: summer months and baseball. ...it carves so deeply, at such a primordial level. The experience can often seem more fundamental than a sunrise. Summer is not just a few months on the calendar. It's the bat's crack or the whizzing snap of a fastball into the catcher's mitt.

A Little Brains - A Little Talent

The American Pastime Baseball Simulator is a statistics-filled ST game that should offer strong appeal to fans interested in sitting in the dugout, making the calls, being the manager.

Start by selecting the visiting and home teams. All 1989 major league teams are available (v. 2.20). (A separate disk with historical teams is also available.) Then, pick the starting pitchers. We're facing realism here; some pitchers may not be available due to injury or recent work on the mound.

Choose the lineup. The program has a lineup that's set to face left-handed pitchers, another for right-handers, and a third for substitute players. And here, too, a replacement may need to be named for injured or inactive players. As the manager, you can continue to change the lineup, using the bench. Check on a player's statistics (and there's quite an assortment), revise the lineup or positions of the player, and set the DH option.

Both defense and offense offer options. When it's time for defense, it's possible to change pitchers, give an intentional walk, move the infield, or shift the players for a pull hitter. Offensive options include pinch hitters, pinch runners, stealing a base, bunts, and the hit-and-run.

Heart

Even with these many options, game-play is smooth and easy. Early in the game, few decisions need to be made. Click the spacebar and the mouse. A line near the bottom of the screen tells what each batter did. Play passes from one side to the other. While the mouse and keyboard handle the game, GEM menus are available for some important options.

In late innings, as the pitcher is tiring, perhaps, or specialists need to be inserted, the manager's job become more challenging. Pitching changes become important and other moves seem to take on more significance.

At the end of the game, statistics from the game can be saved and printed.

The game plays quickly. An automatic option is available to handle one or both teams. If the computer controls both teams, a game is over in under a minute. Playing against the computer, games tend to last less than 15 minutes.

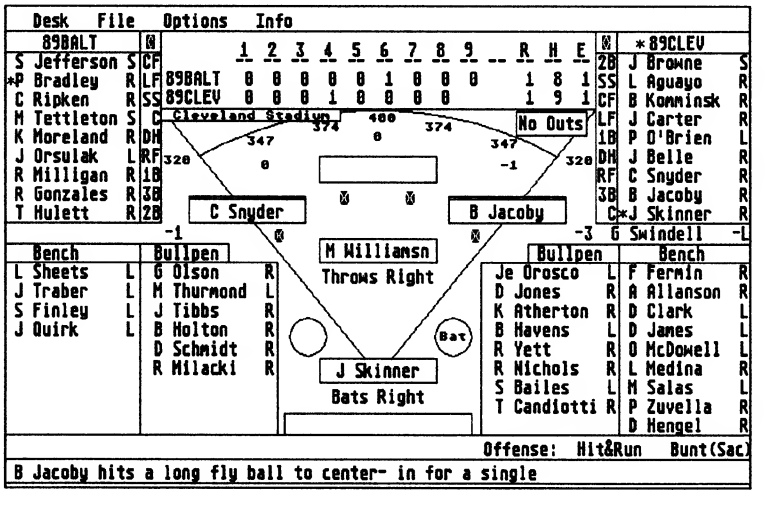
Despite the abundance of options and statistics (a baseball fan's delight), it's all relatively easy going. Anyone who can find his/her way to first base shouldn't have any real trouble figuring it all out.

A batch mode is available. With this, you can run many games between many teams, automatically. This is set up with a simple ASCII file. A sample is included on the disk.

Whatever Lola Wants

But that's not all to be found on the program disk. There are other programs included to please any fanatic.

BB-CLEAR: This will clear out those statistics you've saved from previous games, but not the ones from the original files.



BB–STAT: Statistics from teams (hitters and pitchers) can be printed using this program.

BB–INPUT: This works on the original statistics, which have been created from the real world. This is an important and useful program. Using this program, it's possible to alter player statistics and to trade players from team to team.

BB–STAND: Create leagues and then take a look at various league statistics, such as standings, leaders, and team statistics.

BB–LNDATA: This reads linescores after they've been saved during a game.

Yes, the program is sophisticated. *Baseball Simulator* uses real statistics from real players in a realistic way. Teams tend to perform much like they did during the 1989 season. Inter–league play can be set up and that can offer interesting games. Trades and the chance to alter the original statistics open up additional possibilities.

The author, Eric A. Lindow, seems to have done an admirable job of capturing the feel of managing a team. The inclusion of the various support programs adds new dimensions to this accurate simulation.

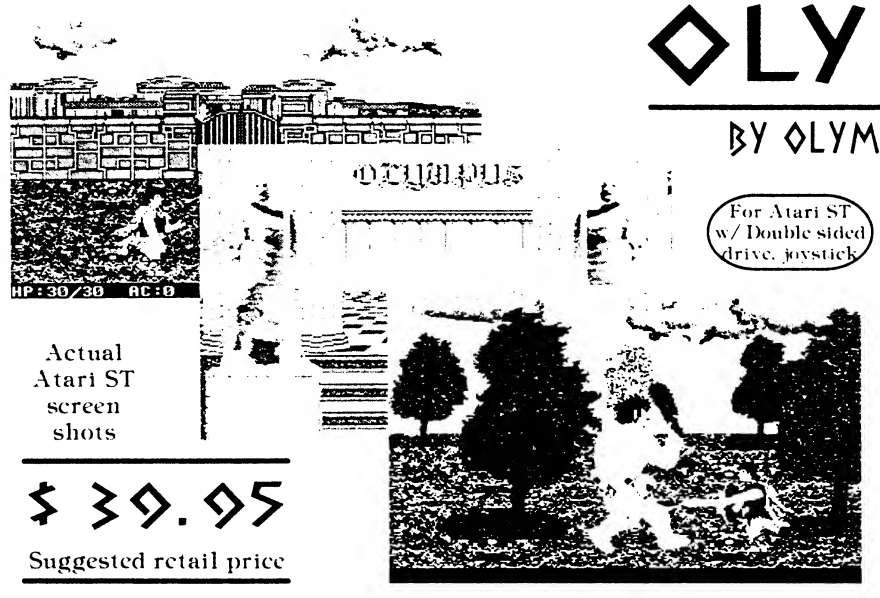
The disk–based documentation does an adequate job of explaining the software. *Baseball Simulator* is available on a double–sided disk ($12) or two single–sided disks ($14). It is not copy–protected. While a demo version is available (CN ST Library disk #383), the low cost of the full–featured actual program seems to make the demo an option only for the terminally indecisive.

A Man Doesn't Know

We've watched and we've thought. We've collected and traded the cards. We've listened to the static–filled and impossible radio, deep in the humid summer. We've taken our children to the park in hopes they'll understand the magic, the allure. We've argued. And we've wondered.

For many fans, *Baseball Simulator* could be the nearest step toward that field of dreams.

[Eric A. Lindow, Lindow Associates, 26 Downer Avenue, Scarsdale, NY 10583]



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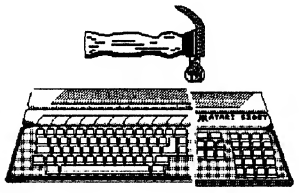


Get Professional Help

Doctor, I think we have a problem here! During the last year or so I have come to suspect that we have a problem on the Atari ST software market.

Problem, you say, with those thousands of titles available and new ones coming all the time? Yes, a problem, and here is why I think so.

Symptom One: Games Abundant. Walk into your dealer's store and look at the shelves. Games take up 75 percent of the display space. Do not misunderstand me. There is nothing wrong with games (unless they really insult your intelligence). I also like to shoot an alien or two from time to time.

Why games? The most obvious reason may be that games are what sells best. Most software publishers are in this business for monetary reasons, they must know. And while the market will not support fifty different wordprocessors or home accounting programs, it will easily support hundreds of games. There is money here, and this is a free market system, like it or not.

Not just money. Quick money, cash your checks and go home. Once a game is on the shelves, your job is done. There is (usually, at least) nothing like the program update and maintenance cycle here. Either a game sells, or it does not--the developers are already writing (or porting) the next one, to keep the cash flowing. When you write a desktop publishing program, your buyers expect you to come up with upgrades, updates, bug fixes and enhancements from time to time. A game is sold and that is it.

Symptom Two: Utilities vs. Applications. This is a much more complicated issue. At first glance, the fact that the second most popular software category for our machine is utilities, does not seem wrong. This impression is reinforced by the fact that most of these utilities range from good to excellent, easily holding their ground against the best on the PC-clone market.

So what is wrong, you say. This Wrotniak guy is just feeling ornery again, and he does not want us to have and enjoy *NeoDesk*, *Quick ST*, *Turbo ST*, *HotWire*, *G+Plus* and all those other wonderful programs!

Not at all. To the contrary, I am happy we have so many good utility programs on our machine; without them our lives would be much more miserable. But, on the other hand, the balance seems to be shifted. We need utilities, but without a large choice of good application programs our machines are not very useful. Utilities make our machines perform better and easier to use, but they do not do anything useful by themselves. A country will not have much use for the most efficient transportation infrastructure, if there are no goods to carry.

Who Does What and Why. There seems to be a regular pattern here, at least among the software developers in the United States. Most of the utility programs are published by small publishers, often riding on the shoulders of one brilliant programmer, while most of the applications are developed (or, at least, distributed) by larger houses, written by more or less anonymous teams.

Putting aside (but not neglecting) the size of the potential ST market for different kinds of programs, there are a few aspects to this situation.

First, the amount of red tape and overhead involved in developing and distributing an application program is, usually, much larger than that in the case of utilities. I can tell you something on this subject: the software company I have been working for during the last five years has more than one thousand employees. Some of them are very good professionals; some, pathetic. But all are wasting quite a lot of time shuffling papers, in addition to (or instead of) their real work. This is not that the company does not know how to do things better, I believe it is one of the best in the field, but it is rather just a matter of size.

On the other end, an outfit like, say, CodeHead Software (to name just one at random), with its advantage of small size, can do things much more efficiently, concentrating just on what they know best--writing good programs. They can stay competitive on our, let us admit it, very small market, where some of the large houses (like Word Perfect Corporation) stay just because of their good will, and some others (like Microsoft with their line of very solid compilers) do not even venture.

Small firms are also much more responsive to our needs. The bugs from the initial release (was it three years ago?) of the best-selling *Publisher ST* from Timeworks will be fixed when the kangaroos come

home (don't even mention any reasonable enhancement suggestions), while *NeoDesk* from Gribnif is being updated every six months or so.

This is not just a matter of size (of the firm or of the program itself), but also of the length of the communication lines. Timeworks did not have much to do with the development of the program they are selling. The program (which I love and hate, but recommend to many, and use very much) was written in Great Britain by the good folks from GST.

When you call or write a large distributor to ask about something or to suggest an improvement, you will be received very nicely, but you will not get in touch with the most competent person--the guy (or gal, Dorothy!) who wrote the program and knows all about it.

Of course, it has something to do with the difference in size between a typical utility and an application; the latter may need an orchestrated effort of a larger team of programmers. This is, however, not a sufficient explanation--*PageStream* (which finally reached its mature stage of a really useful program, that is) has been developed outside of the Big Guy structure. At least some reasons for this division of labor must be elsewhere.

Who Knows What. In my five-year affair with the Heaven and Hell of the Big Software Industry, I have discovered that the best programmers (including the software engineering aspect of the job) are hobbyists. No, I do not want to have the SDI development delegated to hobbyists--I just want to say that a dedicated and smart computer enthusiast will often run circles around a solid professional. Well, not always mind you, only if he feels like that. (A professional, on the other hand, will have the job done, whether he likes it or not, at least in most cases).

Now, here we have a dozen or two brilliant programmers (no names, please, as I may leave somebody out) in our ST world, and virtually all of them are--deep in their heart, at least--hobbyists, whether they make their living from programming or not.

Here we come to the center of the problem: these people live with computers. They can write programs doing impossible things to our machines (*DC Desktop* is a great example here; I am still not ready to review it), but they will not write application programs. Why? Because what they are really best at is computers.

If you want to write a really good educational program in, say, the history of ancient China, you should be good in at least three fields: teaching, ancient China, and computers. All three are equally important. Yes, I once knew a person who is terrific in all three areas, but Brumhilde stated explicitly she has other things to do.

Some of My Best Friends... Thus, with some notable exceptions, we have a situation where our computer wizards are busy writing excellent programs which do, let us face it, nothing, while writing applications is mostly left for the people who know a lot about what the application is dealing with, but less about writing programs and of using our machine to its full capabilities. Well, of course, we still have the larger publishers, but they barely can afford to do things for our small market.

Not so long ago our Publisher sent me a science program to review. The program was, obviously, a one-person effort. It happened that at the same time I was thinking about writing a program more or less in the same field. A very inconvenient situation: you are not supposed to review a competing product, so I said I will review the program only if I find it at least very good.

The program author, as I could easily find out, knows at least twice as much as I know on the subject, and I happen to know some. On the other hand, the program itself has a clumsy user interface, outright ugly design and, worst of all, often unpredictable behavior. There will be no review, as my unavoidably negative opinion may get me accused of a lack of impartiality.

What went wrong? Just the opposite of the situation in the utility area. We have somebody with obvious experience in the field with which the application program is dealing, but he's not a computer wizard (not everybody has to be one, some of my best friends are not hooked on computers). You have to play all instruments in order to be a one-man orchestra.

Is There a Way Out? The situation is bad. The Atari ST market in the United States is very small; according to some estimates there are three times as many STs in Great Britain and, look at it, seven times as many in Germany. This means, that the large developing houses will either ignore us, or do some half-hearted attempts to get a quick buck (there are some exceptions here, again, but they are really few). We cannot blame them: who knows if Atari Corporation will support this market at all a year from now?

Even programs developed in Europe have a hard time getting here. For example, the *Turbo C* compiler from Borland has been sold in Germany for a year or so, without any plans to distribute it here. (Dan Wilga of *NeoDesk* fame bought a copy from Germany and now speaks with a very pronounced German accent--too much time spent with the documentation).

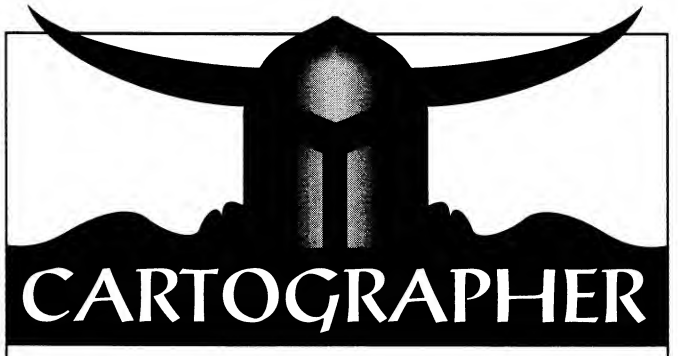
On the other hand, the small independent developers are, with some exceptions again, divided into two groups: those who know all about programming our machine, but are content writing utilities, and those who know well some application area, but could use

some programming wizardry. The rare exceptions make this gap even more visible and painful, as they show what could be done if all this talent were properly combined.

I may sound too radical to some, but I think the survival of our machine in the US is, to a large extent, dependent on small developers. They are showing again and again, that one dedicated person can often do a better job than "professional" teams from Digital Research, Atari or other biggies (the worst programming I have ever seen came from the largest computer company in the world!). The problem is--are they doing the right things?

Well, one day I may wake up and see some wonderful applications written by the same people who keep coming up with all these great utilities. Some of them will just discover they know something besides computers, some will team up with specialists from different areas. Or am I just daydreaming?

I just hope we will not end up as users of a computer system with great games, best utilities and nothing else.



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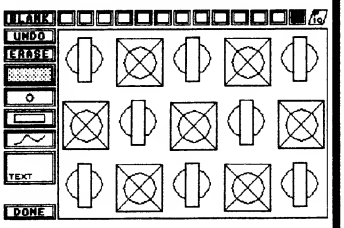

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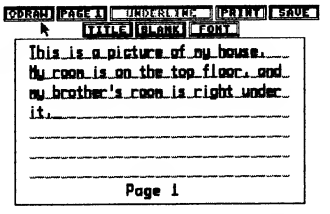

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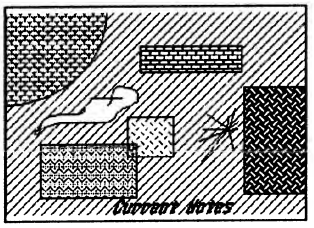


Kidpainter

A Paint Program for Children ... Includes Puzzle Creation

Review by Bill Moes

Kidpainter, a paint program designed for children aged 5–11, offers basic drawing and coloring features. It includes a built–in option to make puzzles from the created pictures and another option to create smaller sized illustrations to stamp onto the main picture. The program is designed for easy use by the intended audience.

Black and White. An installation program should be used first, usually by the parent or teacher. But it's so easy, no adult should have to ask a child for help.

The installation program will set the number of picture screens available (1 or 3 on a 520 ST; 1, 3, or 9 on a 1–meg ST).

The installation program will also let the teacher or parent set options to allow a picture to be printed. A stamp option may be included, which allows the child to create a small image to stamp anywhere on the main picture screen. Another option to select during installation is a mirror function when drawing lines, frames, or circles.

Colors of My Life. The main drawing screen includes basic features: frame, circle, line (straight or free–hand), and text (3 styles, 4 sizes each).

Thirteen low–resolution colors are available. They are used as fills only; it's not possible to actually *draw* with a color. Twenty–three pattern fill styles are also available, although only black/white.

A feature many children will enjoy is the stamp feature. This allows the creation of a small illustration, 1/15 of the regular drawing screen. The regular drawing features from the main screen are available for the creation of this stamp.

The stamps can then be used on the regular drawing screen. It's even possible to quickly fill the entire screen with 15 of the stamps.

One Brick at a Time. Once a picture is created, children may enjoy the puzzle making feature. One section of the puzzle will be shown and the child will try to place it correctly on the screen. It's like a jigsaw puzzle, although all pieces are rectangular.

Kidpainter will auto–load and each child will need his/her own copy of the program. If the children are of different abilities, it's easily possible, of course, to include different program options for each, set during the installation program.

The documentation is a 28–page booklet for adults and a two–page explanation for children. The adult documentation includes easily–read suggestions for creative use of the program, along with the expected details on program installation and features.

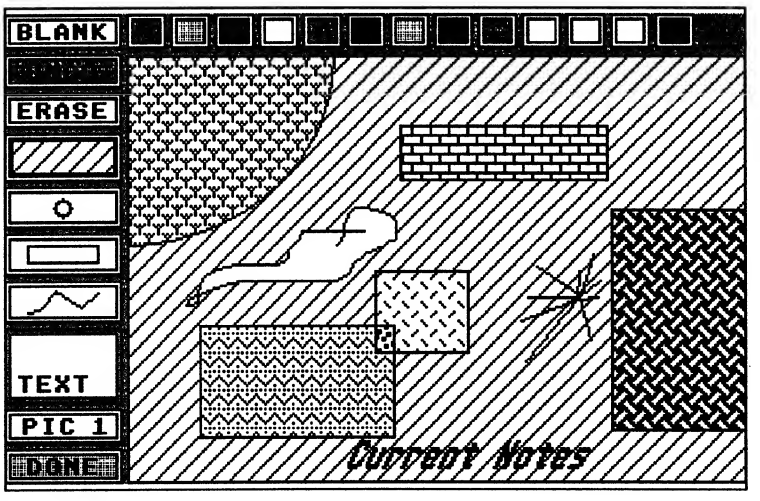
The program requires a color monitor and runs on a standard 520 ST.

The authors of *Kidpainter*, D. A. Brumleve and M. L. Marks, have designed a series of creativity programs for children, including *Super Kidgrid* (CN May 1990) and *Kidpublisher Professional* (CN Jan/Feb 1990).

Join the Circus. *Kidpainter* ($35) is a well–designed paint program for young children. The drawing features are limited to avoid confusion and to encourage creativity. The inclusion of stamp– and puzzle–making screens add many possibilities to the program.

Kidpainter is an ST program that should find a welcome audience in many homes and schools.

[D. A. Brumleve, P.O.Box 4195, Urbana, IL 61801–8820 (217) 337–1937]



The illustration to the left shows the main drawing screen of *Kidpainter.*

The features for creating stamps are the same. The puzzle pieces and the stamps are the same size: 1/15 of the complete picture.

GEMvelope
A Shareware GDOS Envelope Printer

Review by Milt Creighton

Nostalgia

I remember the early days of the ST with mixed feelings. There was the excitement over the ST's seemingly limitless potential, coupled with frustration over the limitations of the available software. Initially, there was almost no software and, since TOS was in RAM, there was no appreciable memory left to create useful programs with the quirky Atari Basic. Early word processors were either ported over from other machines (and thus were difficult to use since they didn't employ TOS) or were bare bones programs with little power or flexibility--even if they weren't expensive. Indeed, *STWriter* was arguably the best of the lot, and it was in the public domain.

Thankfully, those days are behind us. The major applications packages, such as word processors, available to us now are generally competitive in power and features, while they retain an advantage in price and ease of use over similar programs on other machines. I can use *WordPerfect* or *WordWriter* or *PROTEXT* to write a novel for publication or a letter to my congressman (or even the ST editor of this magazine) without being embarrassed at misspellings, hanging margins, or poorly printed text. To further support my writing ambitions, I purchased an Atari SLM804 laser printer to improve the appearance of the text I produce. Consequently, the letters I now write look good--even when I have nothing compelling to say. And the impression is maintained right up until I stuff the pages into an envelope.

The Problem

There the system breaks down, and I am faced with a number of unpalatable choices. There just isn't any easy way to get a decent-looking address on an envelope using the SLM804.

Mailing Labels and Penmanship

Yes, you can use mailing labels--they are available in sheets for the SLM804--but those mailing labels made for laser printers are frightfully expensive and they look tacky on a letter. Alternately, you can hand-address the letter. That's okay if it's a personal letter and you have decent penmanship (I don't). Businesses usually don't appreciate hand-addressed letters--even if it comes addressed with commercial-grade calligraphy.

Desktop Publishing Solutions

Another possible solution is to use a desktop publishing program to address the envelope. This is generally the solution I choose except when writing to the ST editor of this magazine (in which case I use mailing labels because they look tacky). But desktop publishing programs, no matter how good they are, are just not the answer for small jobs. It's a case of overkill. Because programs like *Calamus* and *Timeworks Desktop Publisher* are so powerful, they are complex and generally more trouble than they are worth for single envelopes. What remains is a need for an envelope-addressing utility, powerful and flexible enough to do the job without being so complex it is difficult to use. *GEMvelope* by Roger Richards is just such a program.

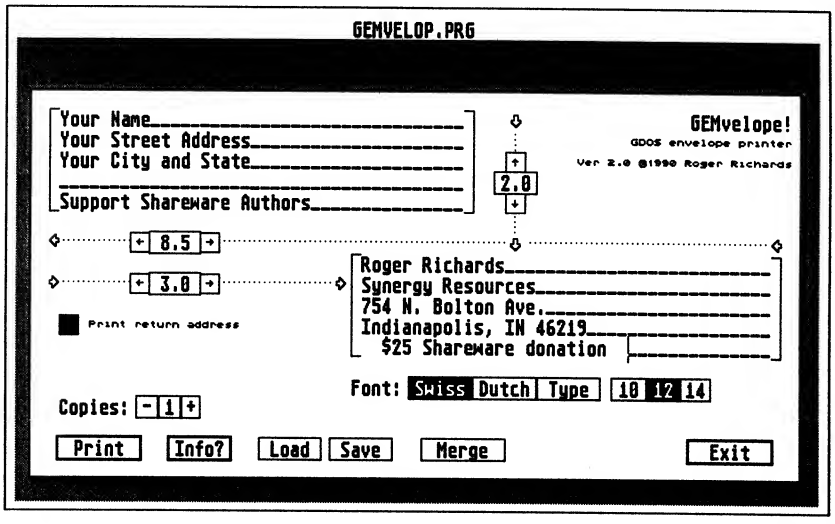
Limitations

I first saw *GEMvelope* on GEnie in the download libraries (it should be available in most public domain libraries). The program description indicated that the author had experienced the same inconveniences I had and created *GEMvelope* (version 1.0) as a solution. I downloaded the program and tried it. *GEMvelope* turned out to be useful but not really what I wanted. It permitted me to print both the destination and return addresses directly on an envelope, using my SLM804 printer, accomplishing this feat through rotation of its GDOS Swiss and Dutch fonts. There were serious drawbacks, however. The program was set-up for long envelopes and could not be modified. Also, *GEMvelope* was designed as a stand-alone program--meaning in order to use it, I had to leave the application I was in and run *GEMvelope* to address the envelope. That requirement was the same reason I disliked using desktop publishing programs for addressing envelopes. Perhaps the most crippling limitation of all was that there was no way to save an address to disk. Each address had to be typed in laboriously by hand. There was a ray of hope, however.

Hope Springs Eternal

The documentation that came with version 1.0 of *GEMvelope* hinted at further development. The new version looked to be just what I wanted, but it was going to cost me $25 to become a registered owner--balanced by the fragile hope that the final version would really appear. Version 1.0 wasn't worth

that kind of money, but I decided that a more complete version might be. So I sent off my check and settled back to wait, grinding my teeth at the lack of an elegant solution every time I needed to address another envelope. Several weeks passed.



GEMvelope version 2.0

Then one day I returned home from work to find a manilla envelope in my mailbox. Opening it, I found a disk labeled "*GEMvelope* version 2.0." I think I left skid marks down my driveway in my haste to try it. To telegraph the ending, Roger Richards had eliminated all my complaints and had produced just what I needed in a very convenient package.

GEMvelope 2.0 comes in three different versions, two of which are desk accessories while the third is a stand-alone program. The implications of the desk accessory versions are important because it means you no longer need to leave an application to run *GEMvelope*. You can now run it from within *WordPerfect* or *WordUp*, for example, as you finish one letter and are about to begin another. The difference between the two desk accessory versions is that one version has slightly fewer features and requires less RAM to run. In the new version, the position of both the return and destination addresses can be adjusted in half-inch increments both horizontally and vertically, which means the program will now handle envelopes of any size that will fit though the SLM804. Also, you can now save addresses to disk and there is now a quasi-clipboard feature using word processor-formatted text and even a true mail merge utility for large jobs. At present, you can choose between Swiss, Dutch, and typewriter fonts in three point sizes, though the ability to add additional fonts would be nice. In short, it overcomes all the limitations of the previous version and I find I use it daily.

Cautions

On the downside, *GEMvelope* uses GDOS with all the RAM requirements and set-up problems of any GDOS-based program. Fortunately, it is compatible with *G+Plus* from Codehead Software so you don't necessarily have to have GDOS loaded until you really need it. In addition, *GEMvelope* would not be as convenient for users of dot matrix printers as it is for those of us with laser or fast ink jet printers. GDOS-based programs print bit-mapped graphic images of the fonts they utilize. As a result, they are slow compared to the native fonts in most dot matrix printers. Also, unless your particular dot matrix printer has an envelope-feed accessory, you will have to remove your normal paper before feeding in an envelope. Finally, there is usually no requirement for dot matrix owners to need an envelope program that rotates fonts since the envelopes can be fed in directly. One possible exception might be the need to address a long envelope with a short-carriage printer where the envelope won't fit inside the carriage. In that case, *GEMvelope* would be a decent solution to the problem.

The Bottom Line

GEMvelope is a handy and well thought-out GDOS-based shareware program for addressing nearly any size envelope. It was designed with the Atari SLM804 in mind, but it should work with most printers that have GDOS printer drivers and require font rotation for printing envelopes. It works either as a stand-alone program or as a desk accessory from within most applications and even has a mail-merge feature. It is a nice bit of programming that I have found very useful in day-to-day use. If you are interested in this shareware program send $25 and your name and address to: Roger Richards, Synergy Resources, 754 N. Bolton Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46219.

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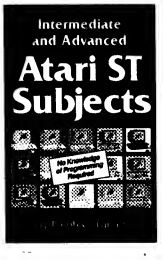

WAACE AtariFest '90 Update

by John Barnes

As the deadline for discount vendor registration draws near the activity around WAACE AtariFest is beginning to pick up. For those who came in late, this event will be held in Reston, VA on 6 and 7 October. It will be the event of the year for Atarians on the eastern side of North America.

For the first time, Atari Corporation will be providing much of the same kind of support that they have provided to World of Atari shows in the past. This includes seed money to help the organizers get off the ground, advertising to reach folks outside the current community, and a solid presence in the form of people and products.

This is a marked improvement over previous years. The decision of the Washington Area Atari Computer Enthusiasts (a coalition of user groups in and around the seat of U.S. Government) to hold the 1990 event in a hotel convention center with the assistance of an experienced commercial exhibit coordinating firm undoubtedly contributed to Atari's decision to lend support.

The advance lineup of attendees also includes a strong presence by GEnie, the official online voice of Atari, and most of the leading innovators. Firms like Gadgets by Small, Talon Technology, D. A. Brumleve, Debonair Software, Fast Technologies, Branch Always Software, ISD, Alpha Systems, Double Click, WizWorks, and more will be on hand. The leading variety retailers like Joppa Computing, Toad Services, and Cal Com have also made commitments.

Personalities like Ralph Mariano, Bob Brodie, Darlah Pines, Neil Harris, Jeff Williams, Dave Small, Nathan Potechin, and Andrzej Wrotniak are also planning to be on hand. Many of your favorite *Current Notes* staffers will also be there.

The Saturday evening banquet will feature a speaker (or speakers?) from Codehead. The *Current Notes* mystery panel will also announce its choice for Author of the Year. The party time following the banquet should be just as lively as ever.

The headquarters hotel is the Sheraton Reston. Phone them at 703-620-9000 before August 5th to get the special room rate of $59 plus tax. Be sure to mention WAACE AtariFest '90. WAACE needs these early registrations to help reduce the cost of the exhbiti space that they are renting. The room rates include tickets to the Fest for room occupants. The normal ticket price is $5 per day, $7 for two days.

The WAACE team is working on special deals for user group ticket sales.

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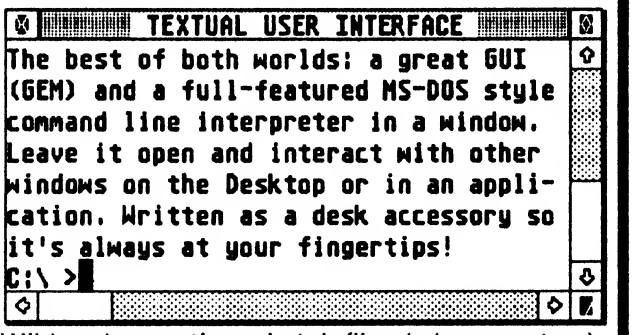

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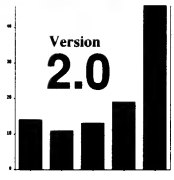

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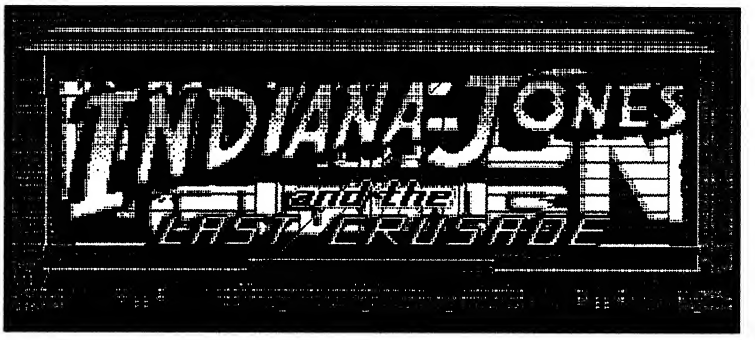
Stuck in a Rut

by Sam Wright



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Indiana Jones, America's favorite archaeologist, is indeed back. But for his latest adventure, don't look to the big screen or even your small screen. Nowadays, he can be found cracking his faithful whip on your Atari ST in two incarnations from Lucasfilm Games: "The Action Game" and "The Graphic Adventure." Appropriately, we'll go with the latter.

In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure*, you take over the role of Indy and replay events occurring in the movie of the same name. That, of course, isn't as easy as it sounds. Seeing the movie will assist you in the direction the game should go, but it won't help you otherwise. Life doesn't always imitate art.

I do, however, recommend watching the movie as a prerequisite to playing the game. It'll make gameplay much more enjoyable and you'll pick up on a lot more of the humor. It's a heck of a good movie, too.

Like Lucasfilm's *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, Indy uses the same no–typing–required interface. All commands are constructed by pointing and clicking with the mouse. Sentences are composed of phrases that are very forgiving if you invert the subjects and objects. Clicking "use" with a key and a door, for example, will yield the same response as "use" with a door and a key. The order isn't important; the parser assumes you want to unlock the door. While awkward at first, the parser quickly becomes second–nature. I prefer it to Mindscape's mouse–controlled parser. The only typing required was in typing in a name for the saved game (up to 30 characters apiece are allowed, with 14 saved games on a hard drive).

Using set verbs, though, limits the possibilities of complete control over the character. For instance, there's no "drop" command, just "pick up." A "give" will work, but only if somebody's there and will accept it. Hence, once you pick something up, you can't put it down. No matter; your hands never get full anyway.

You can speak with other characters, but you must select onesentence of up to four to say to them. The only skill here is to save the game, choose one of the paths, and save the game again if it works, or restore if it doesn't––and not get bored and frustrated in the process. It's all guesswork, especially with the Nazi guards at Castle Brunwald and the checkpoint guards; you have the same dialogue choices for each guard, but only one combination will work per guard. If there were some creative use of the dialogue, in that a choice appears because you did something in the past, this would be useful (there are attempts at doing just that, based on information you've learned, but the only goal in obtaining this information seems to be to score additional IQ points). As it is, we're back to the computerized Choose–Your–Own–Adventure. If you choose the wrong path and don't have anything to offer as a bribe, you're forced to fight. Even though there may be doors on either side of the room, you're stuck in there until one of you reaches the bitter end (of unconsciousness, that is).

Speaking of violence, which seems to be more and more of an attraction in games these days, a funny "censored" block comes down to protect the innocent from gruesome scenes (although the same block appears when Indy changes clothes...). The block isn't big enough, however, to contain the blood that slowly seeps through.

Point of view is still rocky, as it was in Lucasfilm's previous two adventures. You control Indy throughout most of the game, and can also switch to Indy's father to solve a couple puzzles. But in the "cut–scenes," which show what's going on somewhere else, we step out of Indy or Henry and become omniscient. We passively watch something happen rather than actively taking part in it. Did we really have to see Colonel Vogel radio the Zeppelin? Are we that dumb that the

game has to show us where the combination to the vault is being placed? Can't we stumble onto these clues ourselves? How much say do we really have in the outcome of the game? There are multiple solutions and multiple ways of arriving at those solutions (no two games are alike due to the randomness factor). I've no problem with that, but it does make things easy. Too easy. Once you solve the game, how many people go back and play again? The only incentive in doing so would be to get your money's worth or to get as many points as possible. Once you're done and the ending satisfies you, you're pretty much done.

The "what is" command should be abolished. What's the point of seeing a pictorial representation of your surroundings if you have to move the mouse around the room until a subject appears after "what is?" How much thinking does it require to scan the bookshelves in the library until one takeable book lights up? Or to search and search every single room in the castle for a small key?

Surely we should be up to having an intelligent graphic adventure, one that actually requires thinking and will produce that ever-important rush of exhilaration when we put two and twotogether and come up with the answer to a puzzle that haunted us into our sleep.

For Indy, a lot more work was put into the graphics and animation than Lucasfilm's previous adventures. The resolution is higher (monochrome monitors are supported now), the detail is sharper, and the animation is some of the best I've seen for an adventure game. There are many memorable scenes of top-notch animation, especially when Indy drinks from the wrong Grail. One of the funniest for me, though, was after Indy's father is healed. Henry Jones nonchalantly gets up, dusts himself off, buttons his coat, and congratulates Junior. Also, when speaking with other people, occasionally characters will "break that fourth wall" and look at you, rolling their eyes as if saying, "I can't believe he said that." The detail is that good.

Taking up almost two megabytes of hard disk space (Indy comes on three double-sided disks), Indy is an adventure heavily into scrolling graphics and animation. The story length is about as long as *Maniac Mansion*, which was included on just one double-sided disk.

There's no doubt about it. Lucasfilm is capable of spectacular graphics and sound. I hope now they begin to concentrate on story and plot.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure ($49.95) from Lucasfilm Games runs on all Atari STs and comes on three double-sided disks. A coupon is enclosed to either return the double-sided disks for the single-sided version free of charge or purchase the SS version for $10. It is copy protected by documentation ("translating" straightforward Greek letters) and can be painlessly run from a hard drive.

Characters

Whether you want to or not, you'll be forced to uphold your end of a conversation by choosing one of a number of responses. Remember that Indy, while more brazen than his father, would probably prefer talking to fighting, especially in the case of the Nazi guards. The guards on the first floor of Castle Brunwald aren't in shape and are easy to knock out. On the other hand, they are also dimwitted. A trade-off of wits for fists would be wise, because you don't know how many floors there are or how many guards there are. Guards on the upper floors would tend to get suspicious if everyone downstairs was unconscious. Be forewarned that the guards do get stronger and smarter the higher up you go and the closer you get to where your father's being held. By bluffing or bribing the lower-class guards, not only do you keep your health up for that inevitable encounter with the guard with a Ph.D. in boxing, you get more IQ episode points. You may even get some useful information out of them. Always be prepared to fight, though. You never know who might see through your disguise or decide to call your bluff.

Have patience when talking to the guards. Anticipate meeting them and save the game often. Remember that people don't always fall for the same lines you used on someone else.

Biff the Nazi superman: Sure is "nasty when he's sober," eh? But look where you got that information.

Boxing coach: Your score may not increase, but time spent here will increase your fighting skills and develop and improve strategies.

Brody, Marcus: What was the name of that expert geologist anyway?

Butler: He seems relatively distant.

Grail Knight: He must be starving.

Guards, checkpoint: There's a way to bypass all the checkpoints altogether. There's a way to show something to each of the guards to let you pass. There's a way to skip over the first few checkpoints. There's a way to skip over as many as the first six checkpoints. How? What, and spoil all the fun in finding out yourself? One hint: You need to find a will.

Guards, Nazi: You may be able to con them once, but remember that they never forget a face...or a uniform.

Hitler, Adolf: Your brush with fame. Shall I throw the first punch?

Man (airport): He's pressed for time. He's also a doting grandfather. This is a job for Jones. Henry Jones.

Nazi, drunk: How did he get that way in the first place? There's no evidence! He also has more than a couple tidbits of useful information.

Palmer, Laura: Who REALLY killed her?

Reid, John: Geology, archaeology, what's the difference? Five extra points by getting past the students, that's what.

Schneider, Elsa: And I was so looking forward to a longstanding and worthwhile relationship. But I guess that only happens in the movies.

Tracy, Dick: He's popping up everywhere, isn't he?

Colonel Vogel: Maybe if you cooperate, he'll let you off easy.

Locations

After you enter the temple, you're unable to save the game. The hundreds of times that I did die in either the trials or selecting various Grails to see what would happen, I always returned back to just entering the temple, as if I had skipped the cut-scene (Henry is shot and I say I'll be back in a jiffy). Not that I'm complaining, though. It saved me the time of having to restore the game to just before the temple and re-enter.

Airport: Zeppelin tickets are 175 Marks a pop. If you don't have that much, there's a biplane just outside the entrance.

Catacombs: They're not as bad as they look. In fact, I remember checking out a book at the library describing everything about them.

Drawbridge: Maybe you should cordon off the area so no one mistakes it for a passageway when it's up.

Ledge: Whip that brick!

Library: One of the pillar inscriptions will enlighten you with one of the three slabs.

Stacks: Books can be found and taken from them. None, however, are necessary to finish the game, but all can prove immensely helpful.

Strange machine: A cordon of thieves must've made off with the missing part.

Vault: A combination of skill and luck may win you a trophy. Well, perhaps a picture of a trophy, then. You can still solve the game without stepping anywhere near the vault.

Zeppelin (inside): More cooperation time! The person in the locked room is one of those people who can't stop listening to a tune until it's over. He's also one of those people who has to be as close as possible to the source of the music.

Zeppelin (maze): Go as far east as possible.

Objects

Upon first entering a room, select the "What is" command and scan the entire room with the mouse, while watching what things the parser recognizes. Frequently, objects are hidden from full view (either they're too small to be noticed or dwarfed by similar objects) and can only be "seen" using this method.

Alarm system: Remember, it's 1938, when people relied more on themselves and their weapons than machines for protection.

Ark: You've got more pressing things to think about thanthat old lost-again object.

Boar, roast: Even after it's cooled down, I beg to differ that cooked swine would sit well in my stomach without rolling over first.

Book, old: Stranger things have passed for the real McCoy.

Bottle, wine: Do they know about the vintage year? Oh, great. Now you've spoiled it for them. Perhaps if they'd shaken it instead of stirred...whoops, these cross references are getting too obscure here.

Brick: Loose bricks attract whips.

Candelabra: Could it contain the key to Dad's freedom?

Carving (fireplace): Pushing your luck a bit, are you?

Chest (Henry's house): The key here is to unravel the solution immediately or shelve it away for future thought. Either way, the problem will soon dissolve with time.

Coins: Play me a song, you're the piano man.

Cordon, red: The circular cord is strong enough to keep people on the other side.

Eyes (rats): Be thankful they're not snakes.

First aid kit: Because it can be used only once, use it wisely. It's possible to complete the game without using it at all.

Grail: So you've got it. How do you know it's the right one?

Grail diary: Read often and ye shall learn.

Hook: The skeleton didn't miss his hand very much, so he won't miss his hook.

Inscriptions (catacombs): This time around, ALL grails look like something a carpenter would use. Pay attention now and your choices will narrow considerably.

Junk mail: Sifting through junk mail often reveals something of value (I made that up, but you can quote me).

Leverage: Oh, sure. You think leverage is that easy to come by?

Lock (grating): It must've been there for at least a couple centuries. I doubt anyone still has a working key.

Mein Kampf: A signed first edition would impress any well-read, red-blooded Nazi or checkpoint guard.

Moose: He prefers Biff, thank you very much.

Painting (Henry's house): It's a safe bet that it might one day draw the likes of collectors.

Painting (vault): Narrowing your choices from two to one, notice whether the object in the picture glows.

Plug, wooden: Don't get too whipped out of shape and hooked on it. Or is that the other way around? Hope you brought an umbrella!

Post, metal: As a threatening and persuasion tactic, you may be able to pry the whereabouts of Dad from the person who kidnapped him.

Radio, shortwave: It should take awhile before Colonel Vogel can get the word out to the Zeppelin. Interception, that's the name of the game!

Skeletons: They're dead, Jim.

Skulls (six): Dad must have information on this one. What's the frequency, Kenneth?

Slab (catacombs): It's a one-way exit.

Slab (library): To pry it open, you need to find some leverage.

Statues (catacombs): Third, catch up on some reading. First, compare the statues with their facsimiles. Second, change the statues to match the picture.

Stein: A Nazi would have to be tanked before giving up his favorite stein.

Torch: The dry mud is caked around it. Where's a rainstorm when you need one?

Trophy: When a stein just isn't enough...

Umbrella: Ask Henry. He had it last.

Uniform, gray: Maybe now you'll get some respect. On the second and third floors, that is. The first floor is too ill-suited for that.

Uniform, servant: It's possible to solve the game without wearing it, but it does make for a nice substitute until you can unlock the coat rack.

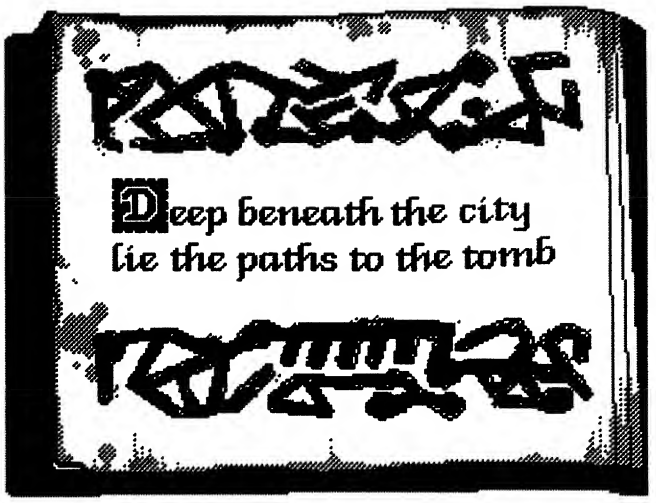
Window, stained glass: Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match. Find me a find, catch me a catch. Matchmaker, matchmaker, look through your book. And make me a perfect match.

Windows, castle: Looking out an occasional one may be revealing. Say, some of these windows have latches!

Wrench: That hole looks like it could be a crankshaft.

Scoring

There are many different ways at arriving at solutions to Indy. Some are difficult, some are easy, and all can be judged in terms of a "best solution" by the number of IQ points you get.



With *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Lucasfilm has added a unique way of scoring, called the Indy Quotient. Consisting of two scores, episode and series, both keep track of your progress throughout the game. The episode IQ shows your current score for that particular game. The series IQ shows your overall status. As you solve puzzles, you are scored according to difficulty. If you save that game and load a previous one and try a different solution, you'll gain additional points, which add on to your series IQ. For example, if you knock out the butler at Castle Brunwald, one point will be added to your episode and series IQ. If you restore to the point just before that and you bluff your way past him, five additional points will be added to your series IQ. All total, there are as many as 800 series points you can accumulate.

Situations

All tied up: Don't expect any knights in shining armor to come to your rescue.

Ending (temple): There are multiple endings, all of which will finish the game. One, however, is the best solution. If you're fast enough, you may be able to achieve it.

Fighting: Practice, practice, practice. After you've gotten to Carnegie Hall, you'll notice a couple things. The longer you wait between punches, the more power they'll have on your opponent. Of course, you don't want to be a human punching bag. Try punching, taking a step back, then punching again. If you've got a particularly feisty opponent, deal him the same: quick upper and lower cuts. He'll never know what hit him!

Flying (biplane): Whoa, there. Steady as she goes. Dad's eyes aren't what they used to be.

Trial, first: I read that some people are branded with a scarlet "X" to mark their penitence. For shame!

Trial, second: No matter how you arrange the letters, it still spells and means "God."

Trial, third: As George Michael said 50 years later, you've got to have faith.

The Atari on the Test Bench

An Indispensable as a Voltmeter, Signal Generator, or Oscilloscope

ATARI 800XL

by Ben Poehland

In the June issue of *Current Notes* I described how I came to own five 800XL–based systems. I briefly described how one of those systems ended up as piece of test equipment on my electronic test bench, and how I used it as a test pattern generator to restore a color TV given me by a friend (Wendy, if you're out there, thanks again!). A few curious folk have asked me just how I did that, and our erstwhile Publisher thought it would make an interesting subject for an article. Although my tale involves a TV set, my experience has implications for color monitors used in all computer systems.

Sick Set

I got the set in late 1985 or early 1986. It was a 19" Ford Philco model C9261AWA (with the Ford Motor Co. logo on it), serial #559463, chassis type 21KT41, manufactured December 1971. Weird technology: 2 IC's, 26 transistors, and 7 vacuum tubes. I placed it on the kitchen table and turned it on for a look–see. It was receiving two channels in snowy B&W, with the picture distorted, out of focus, and slightly squashed. Audio was raspy. After an hour one of the channels appeared in unstable runny color with multiple color images. The VHF dial was not illuminated, and the UHF dial was completely misaligned.

A very sick TV. But it wasn't terminal: no smoke, no hum bars, a decent raster, a good yoke (those are biggies). Tuning, audio, video, and color were functioning, but just barely. I unplugged the set and popped the cover for an inside look. A 14–year collection of dust kitties, roasted insects, cobwebs, and high–voltage "dirt crystals" greeted me. (Believe it or not, this disgusting mess is a normal occurrence in all home video gear!) Using the duster and fine nozzle attachments on my household vacuum cleaner I cleaned out all that nasty stuff, taking care not to disturb the delicate electronic components. This action alone gave me six channels, two of them in lousy color. Progress!

Lucky Breaks

Cleaning the set provided a good opportunity for inspection, and I made two lucky observations that proved indispensable to success. First, the set had a power transformer; most TV's don't have them. A transformer isolates the appliance from the AC line, so you can safely make tests without blowing yourself or your test equipment to Kingdom Come. Second, on a sticker inside the cabinet was a chassis layout diagram and a condensed set of convergence instructions–absolutely vital information. *SAMS PhotoFacts* never published service data for this TV, so that sticker was all I had.

That the set perked up after cleaning suggested all the low–level solid–state components were OK, which was another lucky break.The IC's and transistors were all oddball parts, marked only with the manufacturer's part number: impossible to replace. A treatment of the tube sockets, jacks, pots, switches and tuner contacts with 10% Cramolin CR–10 in isopropanol plus replacement of some cooked resistors and leaky capacitors resulted in a funky picture and clean audio on nine VHF/UHF channels, five of them in lousy color. I yanked all the tubes and put them through their paces on my tester. Five of the seven checked good, but a 6ML8 color differential amp was gassy, and a 6JZ8 vertical oscillator/output checked weak. I ordered replacements from a mail order tube specialty house for about $15.

Atari to the Rescue

New tubes would cure the color instability and compressed raster, but correcting the focus, distortion, and multiple color images required an NTSC color video test pattern generator, which I didn't have. A sense of gloom descended upon me as I paged through test equipment catalogs pricing NTSC generators. Cheapie units started around $350, with really decent ones running well over a grand. I just couldn't

justify that kind of expenditure for a highly specialized piece of test gear that would probably get used only once every few years.

One evening, while perusing the January 1986 issue of *ANALOG Computing*, I spotted an article that astounded me: Don Lee's "Color Alignment Generator." Geez, it hadn't occurred to me to use my Atari 800XL to generate test patterns! I had long forsaken using TV's with my computers, having switched over to analog monitors. In a state of delirium I read the article, typed in the accompanying BASIC program, and saved it to disk as COLORBAR.ATB. Using information gleaned from Don's article, the cabinet sticker, and a general text on video repairs, I prepared a detailed procedural protocol for making the necessary adjustments. I was raring to go when the new tubes arrived.

Sweat Equity

Straightaway I encountered logistical problems. The 800XL in my home office was surrounded by the usual mess of incomplete letters, half-finished manuscripts, and piles of information awaiting database entry. It was a major inconvenience to uproot this system from the office and move it to the test bench. A traffic jam developed as the large video chassis, computer, disk drive, and associated paraphernalia overwhelmed the available workspace on my bench. After a few days of shuffling the computer back and forth I got fed up and bought my third 800XL (for $89) and my fourth 1050 (for $129). For $35 I found a double-decker wheeled cart to hold the computer system, thus clearing my crowded bench.

I began by installing the new tubes and letting them "burn in" for 10 hours. I connected the RF modulated output of the 800XL to the antenna terminals of the TV through the switchbox andselected channel 2 for minimum interference. With the cross-hatch and dot patterns in COLORBAR it was a straightforward matter to adjust the focus, height, width, linearity, position, and barrel and pincushion distortion using the designated controls and yoke centering rings. Aligning the color was a whole different ball game; in blissful ignorance I commenced the alignment protocol that was to lead me through several hundred individual adjustments by the time it was completed.

Color convergence in a video display is nothing esoteric. It just means the red, blue, and green electron beams all converge on the same set of screen phosphors at the same time. In the absence of a video signal modulating the beams, the display will be colorless (white) without any red, blue, or green "halos." My task was to reconverge the beams to eliminate the multiple color images, for which the dot pattern in COLORBAR proved ideal. There were 14 internal controls for convergence, and they had to be adjusted in a prescribed order. Since each adjustment affected the other 13, multiple passes through the procedure were needed to obtain the optimal setting. The logic involved was roughly equivalent to 6 or 7 levels of nested FOR/NEXT loops in BASIC. Yeah, hairy. Persevering through a weekend, I successfully completed the convergence. [Definition of "persevere": constant muttering of unprintable expletives.]

The Payoff

The final adjustment was color balance. There were 10 internal color balance controls, and they also had to be manipulated in a prescribed sequence. To accomplish this I used the grey scale, NTSC colorbar pattern, and the rainbow pattern in COLORBAR. I "persevered" for another weekend and discovered how difficult it is to distinguish between shades of closely related colors. I realized the optimal setting when further adjustments only degraded the color balance. It was then a trivial matter to replace the illuminating bulb in the VHF tuner and realign the UHF tuning knob. And VOILA! My $18 color TV was ready!

The color adjustment was pretty darn close. With minor touch-ups I obtained an excellent color picture for the half-dozen channels I receive strongly. That was almost five years ago, and I'm still watching the old Philco. It just won't die (kind of like my 8-bit Atari!). As I see it, the computer paid for itself with the money I saved on the color TV, and any further use I made of the computer was pure gravy.

It wasn't long before the "gravy" started pouring in.

Green Apple Unfried

A colleague at work had a lab instrument controlled by an Apple II. The system was left running 24 hours a day, and after about a year the monitor failed. The computer was covered by a maintenance agreement with the instrument company, whose FieldService Engineer (lovely title) declared the monitor not worth repair due to "CRT failure." So my colleague got a new monitor for free, and I filched the dead one from the trash.

It was a nice Apple "Monitor II" A2M2010 18MHz green monochrome job, worth maybe $150 at the time. On the test bench, I connected it to the monochrome output on my 800XL for a look. Gads, it really was dead. No raster. Inquiries to Apple and local Apple dealers resulted in Mushroom Treatment (keep you in the dark, feed you manure). I took a chance, plunked down $20 for the *SAMS ComputerFacts* for the Monitor II, and went to work.

The CRT filament was glowing normally, but the +15-volt supply was low, and the regulator was blazing hot. Something was drawing too much current. No light

on the screen suggested a high voltage failure, so I started there. Cathode acceleration in the Monitor II runs about 14,000 volts, but I only found 22 volts. I worked my way back to the horizontal output transistor. Horizontal outputs in video displays take a tremendous beating and are a common source of failure, so when I measured screwy voltages there I was sure I had it licked. I desoldered the transistor and stuck it in my curve tracer. Rats, it was good. The horizontal output was fed by a TDA1180 chip whose pin voltages were all wrong. I touched the chip. Faint sizzle, vapor, odor of burnt flesh. Ouch, it was *me!* But I nailed that sucker: it was the TDA1180.

I obtained a replacement chip locally for $4.00. The original had suffered thermal failure because it was mounted flush with the circuit board, so heat built up between the board and the chip. I installed the new chip with a socket and heatsink, then fired up the 800XL. PRESTO, I had a new monitor! The display needed touchup adjustments, a snap with COLORBAR and the 800XL. The Apple has seen heavy use in several of my systems and works great with the XEP-80.

Some weeks later I ran into the Field Service Engineer and "casually" mentioned what good use I was making of his monitor after I stuck a four-dollar part in it. He just frowned, straightened his 3-piece suit and took off at a high rate of speed.

Drive Trials

In the past year I've experienced increased use of the testbench Atari for disk drive maintenance. I own eight 1050s, all with ICD U/S Doublers. At any given time I have six or seven drives in service, the extras held as backups. When a drive problem occurs I just slip the reserve unit in place so I can complete my work, then tend to the malfunctioning drive on the bench at my leisure. Mostly, I'm seeing belt failures in units placed in service in 1984 and 1985. Test software I use most frequently is the RPM.COM utility supplied with ICD's SpartaDOS. I also occasionally use disk-based and ROMcart 1050 diagnostic software. Recently, I'vestarted tinkering with "cat's eye" alignments and azimuth adjustments using the DYMEK alignment disk. I've also picked up a little pocket change performing adjustments and repairs on 1050s for friends. As my drive fleet ages, the testbench XL will become an increasingly valuable resource for maintenance support of my other systems.

Potpourri

Over the years, the testbench XL has proved useful for solving all kinds of problems. For example, I performed video adjustments on a VCR using test patterns recorded on videotape from the 800XL. By switching back and forth between the computer-generated pattern and the one being played by the VCR on tape, you can really see how well the VCR is performing. A screen full of just plain text worked nicely for this, compliments of my trusty old *AtariWriter* cartridge.

Then there was the great Pi-3 mystery. My nice USI Pi-3 monitor is another freebie salvaged junker, thanks to the Atari. One day I removed it from closet storage and placed it in one of my systems. The video display was bizarre, distorted in completely nonsensical patterns. Cover removed, I fired up the testbench XL with COLORBAR and prepared for the usual alignments. The display was fine! I put the cover back on, the display went crazy again. The Pi-3 has a steel cover, and it had become magnetized. The cure was an audio bulk tape eraser to demagnetize the case. In the closet, I discovered a number of squat cardboard boxes. Oh yeah, my audio woofers. Monster magnets. Sigh... .

Last but not least, cables and mods. I use the testbench Atari to check suspicious cables. I've also made a half-dozen cables from scratch, and it's sure nice to have a test system to try them out before committing to service. I modified several power supplies and both my XEP-80s with the aid of the bench Atari. All five of my XLs bear various modifications, with video output mods, RAMBO, and BASIC RevC ROMs being most common. Before placing any new or modified gear in service, it spends a week on the test bench for burn-in. During the test period I set the computer performing some mindless task such as running an endless BASIC loop or the OS self-test routines. Usually there are no problems, but my second RAMBO was memorable for a spectacular 256K DRAMchip failure that occurred 45 hours into the burn. Much better to catch the gremlins on the bench, before they do real harm.

The 800XL is now a permanent fixture on my electronics bench. For the kind of tinkering I like to do, it is as indispensable as a voltmeter, signal generator, or oscilloscope. It's a workhorse that has earned its keep several times over.

Do It Yourself Harddisk

Specs, Diagrams, Drives, Sources
Controllers, Assembly Outline
Send $10.00 Check or M.O. to:
Alien Enterprises, 2109 Avis,
Mesquite, TX 75149

by Frank E. Kweder

(For the Atari XL/XE Computer)

Mweave

A Creative Computing Apple program demonstrating the use of "HLIN AT" and "VLIN AT" in Applesoft Basic was the source. I created some subroutines to simulate these commands. This is one example. The FOR/NEXT loop can be modified to stop the design wherever you think it looks best.

```
5 REM ADAPTED FROM APPLE PROGRAM:
CREATIVE COMPUTING
10 GRAPHICS 21:VLIN=900:HLIN=950:OFST=20:W=3
11 DL=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561):POKE DL+3,71:POKE
DL+6,6:K=PEEK(87):POKE 87,2
12 ? #6;" multiweave _____":POKE 87,K
20 POKE 708,82:POKE 709,52:POKE 710,6:POKE 711,212
30 FOR I=0 TO 15
40 FOR J=0 TO 39
50 L=L+0.5
60 IF L>4 THEN READ C:L=0:IF C=-1 THEN
RESTORE :READ C
70 COLOR C
80 XV=I:XH=XV:YV=I+4:YH=YV:KV=J:KH=KV
82 GOSUB VLIN:GOSUB HLIN
84 XV=39-I:XH=XV:YV=35-I:YH=YV:KV=39-J:KH=KV
86 GOSUB VLIN:GOSUB HLIN
100 NEXT J
110 NEXT I
120 DATA 2,2,0,2,3,3,1,2,0,-1
130 GOTO 130
900 REM VLIN XV,YV AT KV
910 PLOT KV+OFST,XV+W:DRAWTO KV+OFST,YV+W
920 RETURN
950 REM HLIN XH,YH AT KH
960 PLOT YH+OFST,KH+W:DRAWTO XH+OFST,KH+W
970 RETURN
990 REM MAKE -multiweave- IN LINE 12 INVERSE.
POKE 711,XXX CONTROLS COLOR
```

Ancient and Eyechart

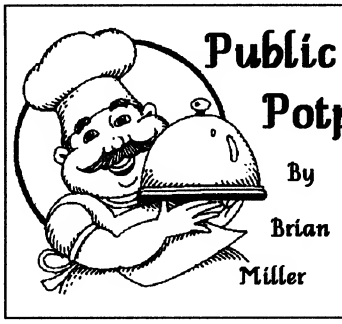
More fanciful names for similar programs derived from the same article as MWEAVE.

Ancient

```
5 REM ADAPTED FROM APPLE PROGRAM:
CREATIVE COMPUTING
10 GRAPHICS 21:OF=0:C=1:W=3
12 SETCOLOR 0,5,6:SETCOLOR 1,2,4:SETCOLOR 2,1,8
20 DL=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561):POKE DL+3,71:POKE
DL+6,6:K=PEEK(87):POKE 87,2
22 ? #6;" ANCIENT hieroglyphs"
23 POKE 87,K
30 FOR I=0 TO 30:FOR J=0 TO 30
40 C=C+0.032:COLOR C
50 PLOT I+OF,39-J+W:PLOT J+OF,39-I+W:PLOT
39-J+OF,39-I+W
60 PLOT 39-I+OF,39-J+W:PLOT 39-I+OF,J+W
62 PLOT 39-J+OF,I+W:PLOT I+OF,J+W:PLOT J+OF,I+W
65 IF C>3 THEN C=0
70 NEXT J:NEXT I
76 IF OF=40 THEN GOTO 80
77 OF=40:GOTO 30
80 GOTO 80
```

Eyechart

```
10 GRAPHICS 21:READ C:OFST=0:W=3
12 SETCOLOR 0,5,4:SETCOLOR 1,9,10:SETCOLOR
2,12,4:SETCOLOR 3,3,9
15 DL=PEEK(560)+256*PEEK(561):POKE DL+3,71:POKE
DL+6,6:K=PEEK(87):POKE 87,2
16 ? #6;" ALIEN eyechart":POKE 87,K
18 FOR J=20 TO 39
20 FOR I=0 TO J
30 L=L+1
35 IF L>1 THEN READ C:L=0:IF C=-1 THEN
RESTORE :READ C
38 COLOR C
40 PLOT I+OFST,J+W:PLOT 39-I+OFST,39-J+W
42 PLOT 39-I+OFST,J+W:PLOT I+OFST,39-J+W
48 NEXT I
50 NEXT J
55 IF OFST=40 THEN GOTO 60
56 OFST=40:GOTO 18
60 TEMP=PEEK(708):POKE 708,PEEK(709):POKE
709,PEEK(710):POKE 710,TEMP
70 FOR Z=1 TO 50:NEXT Z:GOTO 60
80 DATA 1,2,3,-1
```



Public Potpourri

By Brian Miller

ONE TO SAVE YOU SPACE

ONE TO CHECK YOUR SYSTEM

This month's column quite handily meets one of Webster's definitions of potpourri, "a medley, miscellany, or anthology." I rummaged through my pile of Current Notes Library disks and found a couple of programs which struck my fancy. I have tried them out, and thought you deserved to know about them.

PACK2PRG -- *[Current Notes Library, #379: Utility Disk No. 31].* It doesn't seem that long ago that my co-workers and I marveled at the wonder of our first office computer, a Hewlett Packard 150. We thought it represented the very pinnacle of technological sophistication. What other computer at the time, could boast a friendlier menu system, complete with touch screen activation of programs? For an extra $2,500 we were able to add a whopping 10 megabytes of hard disk memory. We had what seemed like infinite storage capability, so I thought at the time.

Only a few years have passed since the office made this purchase, and our HP has already become as obsolete as a museum piece. In fact, one employee refers to it as the "64 Valiant of computers." The HP was soon outstripped by superior replacements in both the Apple and IBM world. Believe it or not, we still have room on the hard drive of the HP. These bigger and better computers were added to our inventory of hardware before we could exhaust the limited amount of space on the HP's hard drive.

I recently bought a 30-megabyte hard drive for my Atari ST. While I didn't fool myself that I would ever run out of room, I am still surprised at how fast space has been eaten up. Since I can't afford a bigger hard drive, and I wince at having to delete programs to conserve space, I have hoped for a cheaper alternative.

PACK2PRG, a pd program from Europe, has given me a partial answer. This utility program can shrink the size of PRG, TTP or TOS files, giving you more disk storage space. The documentation stated that the resulting program would not only be considerably smaller but would load faster because of its smaller size. A GEM patch has been written so that the standard GEM Item selector will specify which file you would like to pack into a smaller size.

I have used *PACK2PRG* on a number of my favorite programs with mixed results. *PACK2PRG* successfully compressed *Easy Draw* from 143,978 to 88,963 bytes. I was amazed at how much quicker the program loaded into memory. *Easy Draw* seems to work without a hitch. I was also able to shrink the public domain program *Speed Reader* (CN #403) from 28,365 to 19,217 bytes.

On the down side, and there is a definite down side, the program locked up after each execution. It didn't seem to matter whether the compression worked or not, or if accessories or other programs were loaded into the system. The screen simply froze, forcing me to re-boot after each use of the program.

PACK2PRG did not work with every program I tried, either. *Wordflair, WordUP, and pc ditto* could not be compressed successfully. *PACK2PRG* is a program you should probably use at your own risk. If you are working from backups of your program you should have less to worry about. While having to re-boot was a chore, no other damage appears to have been done.

PACK2PRG could be worthwhile, despite its flaws, if you value conserving space. Certainly a program of this type which worked more reliably would be of significant value to those of us who can't afford to trade up to a larger hard drive. It could also help stretch the space of individual floppy disks. In the IBM world a commercial and shareware equivalents of *PACK2PRG* are available. Hopefully *PACK2PRG* will be improved or someone else will offer an improved product for the Atari ST.

CHECK V1.1A -- *[Jon Clarke, RD# 2 Drury, Auckland, New Zealand Current Notes Library Disk # 413.] CHECK V1.1A* is a clever little program which presents a number of key pieces of information about your system in an entertaining way. Complete with music and animated characters, this utility program displays the amount of ram memory, system time, printer, status, drives on-line, and remaining disk space on the drive used. I have included a screen shot to show you just how the program depicts this information.

It is not as though you can't get this information some other way, but I enjoy the novel approach the author has taken to present these vital statistics. The program can be run in either medium or low resolution

of your color monitor. The author's documentation discusses a monochrome version of the program. He also states that the program can be executed from the auto folder, though not with TOS 1.4. I was also unable to run CHECK V1.A from the auto folder of my ST which uses an earlier version of the operating system.

This program is certainly not an absolute must have. But more than a few times in the past, I would have appreciated a program like this to let me know how much memory I had remaining after loading various accessory programs.

I usually end this column with an invitation for authors and enthusiasts alike to send me Shareware or Public Domain software they feel deserves recognition. Well, I am delighted to report that at least one person has taken me to task on this offer. A few days ago, I received a letter and disk in the mail from a shareware author. He has asked me to check out his programs, use this column to let you know about them, and send the disk on to *Current Notes* for inclusion in this burgeoning library. I hope to do all three. If you would care to send deserving examples of shareware or Public Domain software, please do so c/o. Brian Miller, 13848 Delaney Road, Woodbridge, VA 22193.

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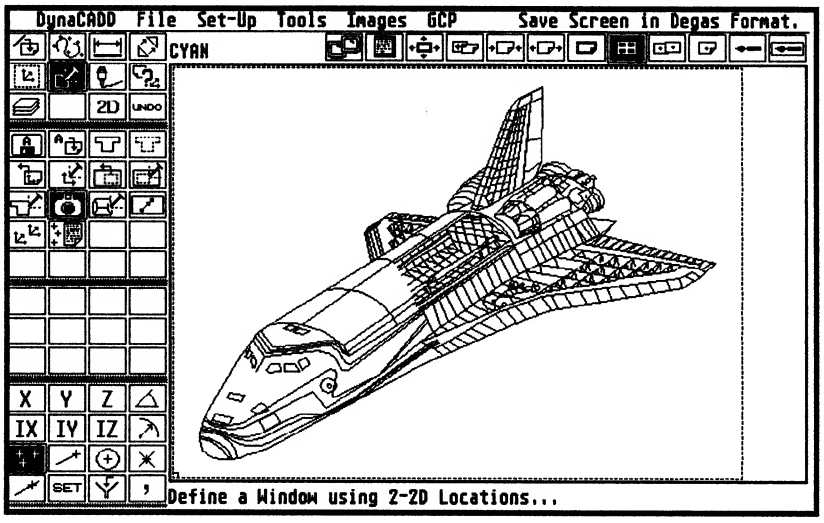
See us in The Calamus Font Resource Guide from S.Cerovich

PUBLIC ST LIBRARY DOMAIN

20 NEW DISKS!

#460: DYNACADD DEMO, ver. 1.76. One of the best CADD packages for the Atari today with many new state-of-the-art features. DynaCADD Version 1.76 redefines the meaning of excellence in CADD applications. This fully functioning demo (except for SAVE and EXPORT .DXF capabilities) also comes with several additional utility programs. FONTEDIT.PRG - The DynaCADD Font Editor for creating new fonts or editing existing ones. MAKEPLOT.PRG - In the event that you require a plotter driver that is not included with DynaCADD, this program will allow you to create one. CVG2DEF.TOS - This program has been created to convert Calamus Vector Graphic files (CVG) into DynaCADD DEF 2.0 files. This utility allows a sign maker to create graphics using Calamus Outline Art and then import the result into DynaCADD for output on a DynaCADD supported device such as a Roland CAMM-1 signmaker or pen plotter. Also included as a plotter driver is GEM.PLT which allows you to output your drawings to disk as a GEM Metafile. **System Requirements:** Atari ST/MEGA 1MByte of RAM, DS/DD disk drive and a monochrome monitor. Both a hard drive and a Math Co-Processor are highly recommended. DynaCADD is fully compatible with the Moniterm 19" monitor.



#461 CALAMUS OUTLINE ART DEMO (M), by ISD Marketing, contains many options and features. This working demo (without SAVE feature) allows you to create your own vector graphics. Companion program to Calamus, the most powerful desktop publishing program for the Atari ST. This demo will give you an idea of the magnitude of the program. Includes some documentation. Requires 1 meg., DS drive.

#462 BLOODWYCH DEMO, (C). Fully-Playable "Dungeon Master" game by Mirrorsoft. Includes split-screen for two-player simultaneous action. This disk includes WYCHINST.TOS, a utility that will allow you to install the BLOODWYCH DEMO on your hard drive.

#463 BLOOD MONEY DEMO and **WIPEOUT** (C). BLOOD MONEY - Fully-playable demo of one of the best horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em ups for the ST! WIPEOUT DEMO- The manic thrills of Hoverboarding await you in Intergalactic Hoverboard Challenge, pitting you against a host of hostle alien competitors. Also included on this disk, FONE VOICE - A fun little utility that allow you to create crazy messages for your telephone answering machine! Docs. included.

#464 PAYROLL and **PERSONAL FINANCE MANAGER.** PAYROLL vers. 3.0, by Wilford Nieprashk, this fully-functioning program allows for complete payroll operations without changing screens. Quarterly reports are supported. Even allows for printing of paychecks. Up to 200 employees can be monitored on this program. Please support this author - registration for this type of program is extremely inexpensive! PERSONAL FINANCE MANAGER DEMO by Michtron is a database program designed to handle personal bank accounts, credit card transactions, and many other financial applicaitons. Generates graphical reports, sets up budgets, and plots graphs. Fully functioning except for PRINT function and limited to 30 entries.

#465 MAIL PRO, (M)(DS) vers. 4.0, by Hi-Tech Advisers. Latest version of this simple and efficient filing and Mail-Merge system for the Atari ST. Allows you to create and retreive form letters. Works in conjunction with your word processor. Establishes records, prints mailing labels and return address labels. This DEMO version offers limited entries. 1 meg. required.

#466 16-VOICE SEQUENCER - Shareware by Henry Cosh. Features multi-voice recording, split keyboards and/or velocity ranges. Variable resolution Map of 8 voices on the Desktop continuously. Mouse-click sampling of any music in the Map. Simple editing using mouse and MIDI keyboard. Set Time signature, tempo, and local quantization. Input notes from MIDI or Atari keyboards!

#467 MIDI MUSIC MAKER ver. 1.61, Shareware by Dave Henry - Do you have some old music files gathering dust that you have always wanted to play through your synthesizer? Here is the answer! Midi Music Maker is the world's most comprehensive music player program capable of playing many of the thousands of music files available through public domain for several types of computers. It will control the songs and regulate the instrument presets and channels and on which the music is sent to synthesizer. The following file types can be played by Midi MusicMaker: Music Studio, Music Studio 88 (Atari ST), Music Construction Set (Atari ST), EZ-Track (single track)(Atari ST), Standard Midi Files (format 0, format 1)(all computers), Sid Player Music (except stereo)(Commodore 64/128), Master Composer (Commodore 64/128), Advanced Music System (I and II)(8 bit Atari) Midi Music System (8-bit Atari), Orchestra-85/90 (Color Computer), Lyra 1 and 2 (Color Computer). Midi Music Maker can also create Standard Midi File format 0 files from any of file types listed in 1.2, even from the SMF files themselves. The files created will include the settings so that you have control over with this program. The basic requirements are an Atari ST, a midi synthesizer, and some music files. Midi Music Maker runs only in medium and high resolution. Unmodified 520STs will work for most music. One meg or larger STs are required for the larger EZ-Track files. The music will play through the ST speaker but a synthesizer with full midi capability is needed for best results. Some songs may use up to 16 channels simultaneously or may put up to 8 notes on a single channel. A synthesizer capable of handling the larger number of notes and channels is required for these songs.

#468 CALAMUS FONTS, Disk#3 - More Calamus Fonts, including ADVERTISING, BARNUM, CASUAL, CELTIC, CHROME, FLASH, HARLOE, MOUSE, SCHOOLBOOK, WESTERN and includes the ATARI, MASTERCARD, and VISA logos in .CFN format for easy input into any Calamus document.

#469 PAGESTREAM FONT EDITOR, the Official Font-Editor from Soft-Logik.

#470 CLIP ART Disk #14. PEOPLE, PEOPLE, AND MORE PEOPLE! All types of people in a variety of everyday situations. Captured in Degas format. Perfect for Desktop Publishing applications. DSLIDE viewer included.

...MORE DISKS ON NEXT PAGE!

#471 CLIP ART Disk #15. EVEN MORE PEOPLE! Includes DSLIDE viewing program.

#472 INSTANT GRAPHICS! Version 2.14 Shareware by Larry Mears, a revolutionary new way for Atarians to communicate over the modem in color, sound, and motion. For use with terminal programs that allow the use of Desk Accessories. The users screen rapidly fills with graphic objects in full color.. boats, airplanes, saucers, trains, cartoon characters, etc... which are then animated around the screen in concert with a cacophony of beeps, boinks, hoots and grunts! You can even play or hear MIDI music over the modem! Letters can be big or little, bold, italizied, or even turned upside down! It's magic! ("Souped-up VT52"!) If you are tired of the bland VT52 colors that most ST BBS' offer, then you will be pleasantly surprised by the super fast graphics and sound this NEW terminal emulation unlocks!

#473 INSTANT GRAPHICS! UTILITIES. Includes IGS PROFESSIONAL, ver.1.6, an Instant Graphics editing and graphics creation utility. IG HELP.TXT, an in-depth tutorial written by XXX and can even be executed in IGS format! MS2IMD.PRG, a utility that converts Music Studio files to IG format for playing MIDI songs over your modem!

#474 MINITERM and MINIBBS - Two Swiss terminal programs. MINITERM is a full-featured desk accessory. MINIBBS, a fully operational BBS with up/download, chat mode, and message bases.

#475 HYPERSCREEN and **STDCAT ver.4.0** HYPERSCREEN shareware by Ricardo J. Pearson as a useful implimentation of the Hypertext concept on the Atari ST. An information storage system that is fast, flexible, and easily tailorable. Can be used for many simple tasks. It features an interactive user information tool that goes beyond the simple text editor in retrieving and viewing text. It allows the manipulation of that text and graphics, so that the user gets exactly what information they need when they want it. Similar to scanning a newspaper or magazine for interesting articles. STDCAT ver.4.0 by Bob Silliker,is a great disk cataloger program. Pop in your disk, it reads your directory and quickly prints you the label! (Won't work with TOS 1.4)

#476 ME FIRST, (C) vers. 2.0 - Interactive learning games/stories for children. Includes documentation and additional DATA files for extended play. Shareware.

#477 CLASS ver. 2.05 and **EZ-GRADE DEMO** - CLASS vers. 2.05 by Gary Wrenis a combination database and spreadsheet for teachers. CLASS is a computerized class roster, providing a record of students and their grades, but this version will do this and much more, including alphabetizing, storing, and printing a list of all students in the class, personal comments, and their grades. CLASS stores and displays up to 30 grades for each student, including the GPA/AVG and the final grade,it ranks students according to their scores on any assignment calculate current or final averages for each student- acts as a "grade calculator"for unrecorded grades determine the letter grade that corresponds to each student's score -- calculates the frequency, mean, variance, and standard deviation for each grade or assignment -- displays a table and graph of the distribution of each grade, lets you record letter grades quickly using the number keypad -- allows you to set and change the ranges and weights for each grade ,lets you set a "curve" and calculate grades accordingly --lets you experiment with different curves and immediately see the results in graph form, transforms all grades and files recorded as scores into equivalent letter grades, automatically sets or adjusts the ranges for each grade to fit a normal curve, automatically checks for typos when recording grades - prints roster with single, double or variable spacing -- prints names only, parts of a record, or names and a grade, in single or double columns -- does all of the above for either number or letter grades - SHAREWARE! EZ-GRADE DEMO- Demonstration program of commercial gradebook program from Integral Software.

#478 SPACEWARS (C)(DS) vers. 1.0- New Outer Space Shoot-'em up game!

#479 HERO IID: This is a fully-playable DEMO version of the HERO II gaming system by Dan Winslow . Includes Dungeon Construction Set, designed to create and manipulate dungeons for the HERO II game system. Virtually every aspect of the dungeon is under the control of the user, from the appearances of their images to the creature and item names and abilities as well as the story line and quests. Finished dungeon designs may be extracted as data files playable by the HERO II game player, and freely uploaded and transferred.

All Current Notes disks are only ***$4.00*** *each (Add $1 / each 6 disks for shipping and handling up to a maximum of $6.00)*

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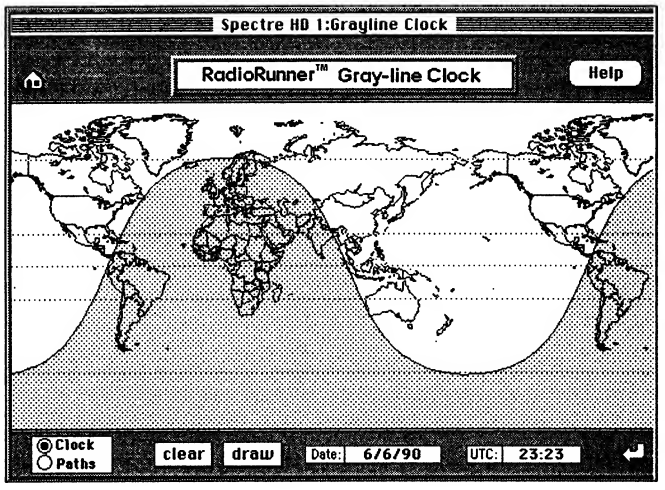
New Spectre CN Library Disks

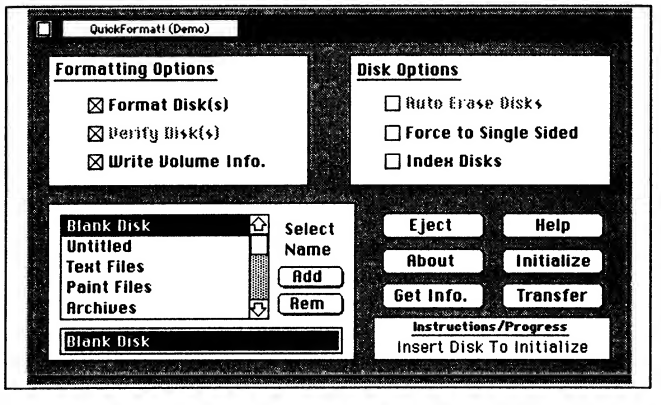
by Jeff Greenblatt

This month, *Current Notes* is releasing nine new PD and Shareware Spectre compatible (Version 2.65, 128K ROMs) library disks. For those of you using the Spectre with 64K ROMs, I recommend the CN Magic library (write for a full listing). If you like and use any of the files, don't forget to make your shareware donation(s) to the author(s). Here is a rundown of what each of the new disks contain:

#S72D: HyperStacks #8. 12 stacks for use with HyperCard or HyperDA: Area Codes Update, Auto Floppy Log 3.01, Chemist's Helper, Dot to Dot 3, Four Letter Words, Greyline Clock, Home Button Maker, HyperHome 2.2, Magic 4 Cards, Patches, Roman Dates, and Valdemar.

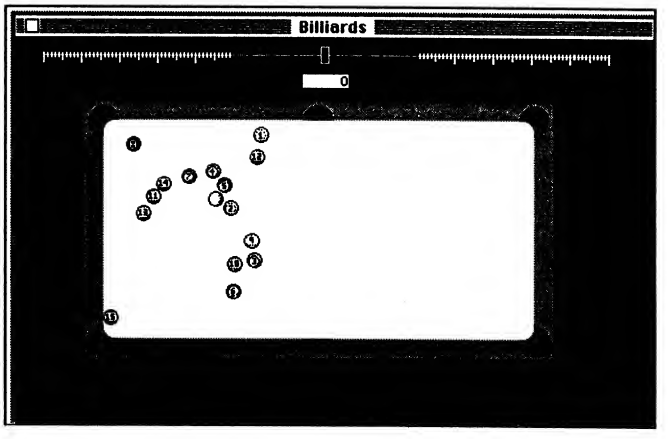


#S73: Utilities #11. 8 new utilities: Anonymity 1.0, Cursor Designer, Diamond 4.2 and docs, PRAM-5.0, QuickFormat 6.2, MW/MD Launcher and Docs, SecureInit and Docs, and, Take a Letter plus docs.

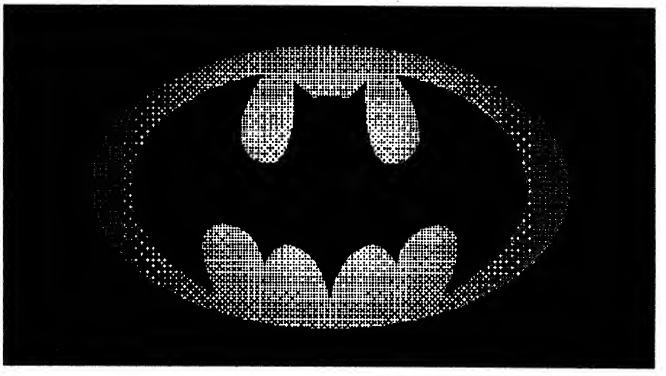


#S74: Sounds #7. 16 new sound resources and the Finder Sounds CDEV. The sound files are Beep Sound 3, Destination, Disk Eject, Disk Insert, Dit, Drag Off, Drag On, Files Done, Finder Sounds and Docs, New File, Rear2front, Resize, Shut Down Sound 2, Spanish Inquisition, Startup, Type Return 2, Type Space 2. In order to use Finder Sounds you must use Finder 6.1.4 with Spectre. These sound files may also be used with SoundMaster (see other CN Sound disks for the latest version).

#S75: Games #10. 5 new games for your enjoyment: 1863 V1.0, Billiards plus Docs, Faulty-Towers, Gobbler plus Docs, and Surgery.



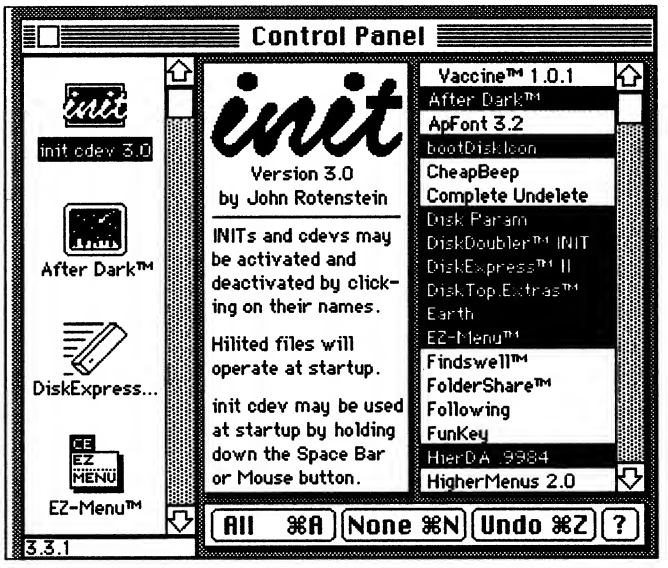
#S76: StartUp Screens #1. 12 Startup Screens and Screen Maker 1.0.1, which allows you to make your own screens. The files are Bat Logo, Batman, Bloom County, Farewell, HIT ANY KEY, How Much?, Mac Magik, NeXT, Oldfinder, Square Wave, World Map,



AJO Bird and Screen Maker 1.0.1 plus Docs. In order to use any of these screens, simply rename any of them to StartupScreen and insert it into the System Folder, and then reboot. Instead of Welcome to Macintosh, you will get the Startup Screen of your choice.

#S77: Graphics #3. 8 new graphics-related applications: .REL Converter, Banner Maker plus Docs, Artistic, Fractal Mount plus Docs, NavCom, RLE Utility plus Docs, Snap 2.1, and Spiro-Graft.

#S78: EPS ClipArt #2. 12 new PostScript ClipArt files for importing into your favorite Mac or ST DeskTop Publishing program and UltraScript ST (use Transverter to use them with ST programs). They are Art Week, Black Cat, Bow 2, Evergreen Tree, Halloween, Holiday Greetings, Horizontal Border, Ink Well, MenRet Month, Mod Border, Music in School, and Vertical Border.



#S79: Utilities #12. Contains many of the new CDEVs and INITs recently released as shareware or PD plus Disinfectant 1.7, the virus detector and killer. The files are InitCdev 3.0 plus Docs, BackDrop plus Docs, Facade plus DOcs, Fix Desktop plus Docs, IconWrap 1.2, InSit?Delete plus Docs, MenuTuner, Named Folder plus Docs, Oliver's Buttons 1.0, Pointing Device, RAM Check plus DOcs, Toilet 6.0.3 plus Docs, Trash Patch plus Docs, and UnScrolly plus Docs.

#S80: Postscript Fonts #4. 5 new Postscript fonts for use in any Mac Word Processing or DTP application in combination with Transverter and Ultra-Script ST. The fonts are ChiTown, Daytona, GE/RCA, SanSerif, and Tempo (see sample of fonts below).

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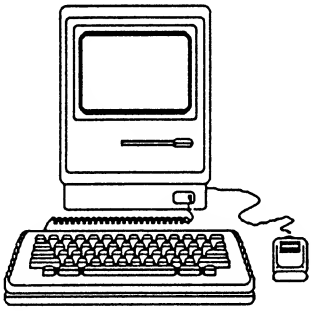

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NOVATARI XL/XE PD Library!

In response to many concerns voiced by our customers, we have decided to revamp our XL/XE selection of library disks. After considering many of the options available to us, we have decided to start a new XL/XE library containing all new titles and a few old ones all put together in a new, consistent format. This format means that the disks will be easier to use and will contain more quality software.

Due to the amount of work involved in releasing fifty new disk titles, the new disks will be appearing at a rate of hopefully five or six a month. The old library will still be available and a list may be obtained from the Mail Order Librarian.

To prevent confusion between the old and the new libraries please use the new three letter and number code to identify orders from the new library.

Attention all programmers! NOVATARI is always seeking contributions to its library. If you've written something you think others would enjoy using or you have something we don't, by all means, send it in. Please remember that all submissions should be public domain or shareware. Disks accepted into the library will be exchanged for library disks on a one-for-one basis. Please indicate your choices when you send in your submissions. Please send your submissions to:

Jeff King
10033 Clearfield Ave.
Vienna, VA 22181

Applications

APP1 – Textpro 4.0 (Latest text editor for the Atari. Works with Mydos 4.50)

Demo Disks

DMO1 – Classic 8–bit Demos (A collection of 7 demos from the early days of Atari.)
DMO2 – 8–bit Graphics Demos (4 of the more recent 8–bit demos.)
DMO3 – Video Blitz (130XE Required) (One of best 8–bit demos ever released.)
DMO4 – German Sound and Graphics (An excellent art and music demo.)

Disk Operating System

DOS1 – DOS 2.5 (An old DOS standby.)
DOS2 – Rainbow DOS (An interesting graphics dos.)
DOS3 – Desktop DOS (A demo of an ST–type desktop for the <dl>8–bit.)
DOS4 – DOS 4.0 (Never officially released by Atari.)
DOS5 – DOS 2.6 (Similar to DOS 2.5)
DOS6 – MachDos 3.7a (An Atari DOS alternative.)
DOS7 – Mydos 4.50 (One of the best Atari DOS substitutes.)
DOS8 – DOS XE (The DOS released by Atari to provide support for the XF551 drive.)

Game Disks

GAM1 – Text Adventures (Secret Agent, Survival, Kidnapped, Adventure in the Fifth Dimension)
GAM2 – Space Games II (Outpost, Microids, Blockade, Nukewar, TrekST, Maniac Maze, Space Fort)
GAM3 – Machine Language Games (Fifteen fast 100% M/L games)

Graphics

GRA1 – Video 130XE version 2.10 (Requires a 130XE. An image acquisition and processing system. Requires Computereyes to acquire images.)
GRA2 – Video 130XE Images (4 images for use with the Video 130XE program.)
GRA3 – More Video 130XE Images
GRA4 – GIF 2.0 (Allows you to view the high resolution color pictures in the Graphic Interchange Format (.GIF).)
GRA5 – GIF Pictures (Several pictures for use with the GIF Viewer above.)
GRA6 – DRAW 7 (130XE Required. Excellent drawing program that includes animation capability.)

Utilities

UTL1 – Screens (An impressive windowing utility.)
UTL2 – Help Key Routine (Include the HELP key in your own programs.)
UTL3 – ARC/ALF Utilities (Several file compression and decompression utilities.)

Disks are **$3 each** with $1 shipping per 3 disks. Send all orders to:
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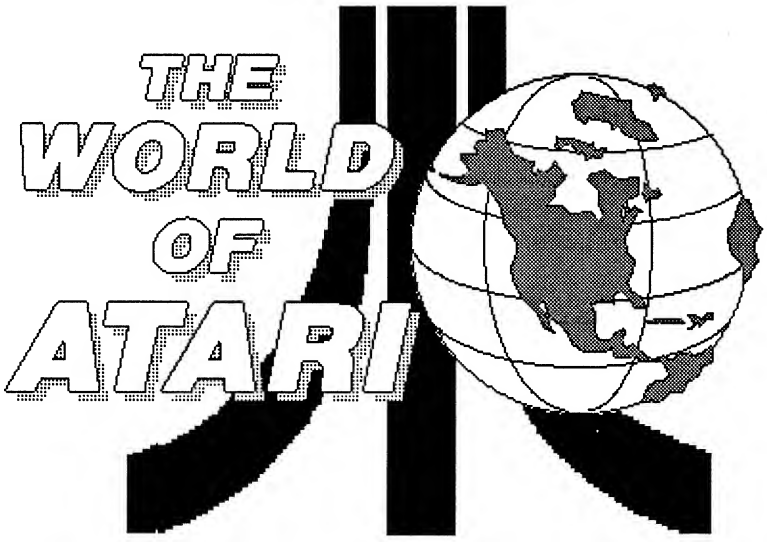

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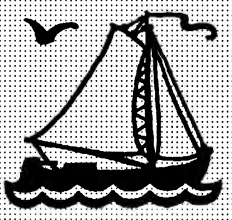

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